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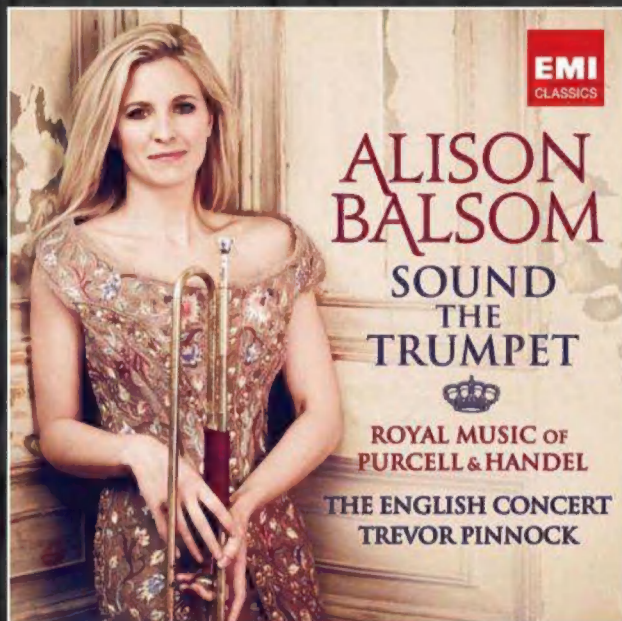


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# Alison Balsom



Sound the Trumpet is an album of glorious baroque music associated with royalty where Alison brings the music of Purcell and Handel to life. Alison is working with the top experts in this field - Trevor Pinnock and the English Concert. She is also joined by the countertenor, Iestyn Davies and soprano Lucy Crowe in some delightful and slightly different performances of some familiar repertoire.

*Other titles to look out for*



## The John Wilson Orchestra

John Wilson leads his handpicked orchestra and an all-star cast of singers in this dazzling album of Rodgers & Hammerstein hits including music from The Sound of Music, South Pacific, Oklahoma!, Carousel and The King & I. This 14-track album showcases stunning new recordings of the ground-breaking film scores of the great musical duo featuring soloists Sierra Boggess, Anna-Jane Casey, Joyce DiDonato, Maria Ewing, Julian Ovenden, David Pittsinger and the Maïda Vale Singers.



## Angela Gheorghiu

Powerful music, a gripping story and a tragic end: In July 2011 Puccini's ever-popular Tosca returned to The Royal Opera with a fabulous cast. The star singers in this revival were Angela Gheorghiu, Jonas Kaufmann and Bryn Terfel; the Royal Opera Chorus and the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House were under the baton of Antonio Pappano, the Music Director of the Royal Opera House.



## Alexandre Tharaud

In a startling new departure for the French pianist Alexandre Tharaud, he invites a diverse group of musical friends to join him in celebrating Le Boeuf sur le toit, the legendary Paris cabaret that became a hotspot of Parisian and international culture in the heady 1920s. A confluence of jazzy musical currents brings together French composers like Ravel, Milhaud, Wiener and Doucet and American songwriters like Gershwin, Kern and Porter.



## Otto Klemperer

This 10 CD set not only includes the symphonies (with both versions of Nos. 3 and 5 and all three of No. 7) but also nine of the Overtures (with duplicate versions) and extracts from the incidental music to Egmont and the ballet The Creatures of Prometheus. Although these recordings have been available in various couplings, this is the first time that a comprehensive collection of Beethoven's solo orchestral work conducted by Otto Klemperer has been made.

# Sounds of America

Gramophone's guide to the classical scene in the US and Canada



**Focus** Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra – page I » **The Scene** Live concerts – page IV » **Recording reviews** – page IX



'Benign tyrant' Nicholas McGegan was brought in to enliven the PBO; he has made it his mission to protect them from an over-fastidious concern for 'authenticity'

## 'MY JOB IS TO MAKE A SEASON TO ANNOY EVERYONE!'

The gregarious Nicholas McGegan respects the traditions of his Bay-area Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, but that doesn't mean he's afraid to shake things up a little when it comes to repertoire, writes Joshua Kosman

Now entering its fourth decade, the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra is labouring under a misnomer. Granted, the music of the Baroque has always figured largely in the repertoire of this San Francisco period-instrument group – particularly Handel, whose oratorios have been a nearly annual mainstay. But so too have Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Berlioz and, more recently, Brahms. The PBO has even given the premieres of commissioned works by younger American composers. 'In a way, it's too bad that we're called a Baroque orchestra,' says violinist Elizabeth Blumenstock, a member of the orchestra since its first season in 1981. 'If it were just a "period instrument" orchestra we'd have much wider latitude.'

But such questions haven't dimmed the ensemble's lustre. Under the aegis of music director Nicholas McGegan, the brisk and gregarious English conductor who has led it since 1985, the PBO has established itself as a leader in the field of historically informed performance, both in the US and internationally. Its 30 or so annual local concerts are among the highlights of the Bay Area's musical scene. In 2004 it was named Ensemble of the Year by *Musical America* magazine. It collaborated with the Mark Morris Dance Group in the US premieres of Morris's productions of Rameau's *Platée* and Purcell's *King Arthur*. And in the 1990s, it made a string of well-regarded recordings for Harmonia Mundi, including one of Handel's *Susanna* that won a *Gramophone* Award.

But that avenue has since dried up; its last project with Harmonia Mundi was a 1999 recording of Thomas Arne's *Alfred* featuring countertenor David Daniels. So last year the PBO, like many orchestras in these straitened times, took to releasing its own recordings.

The programme, begun by former executive director Peter Pastreich and continued by his successor Michael Costa, began by tapping into

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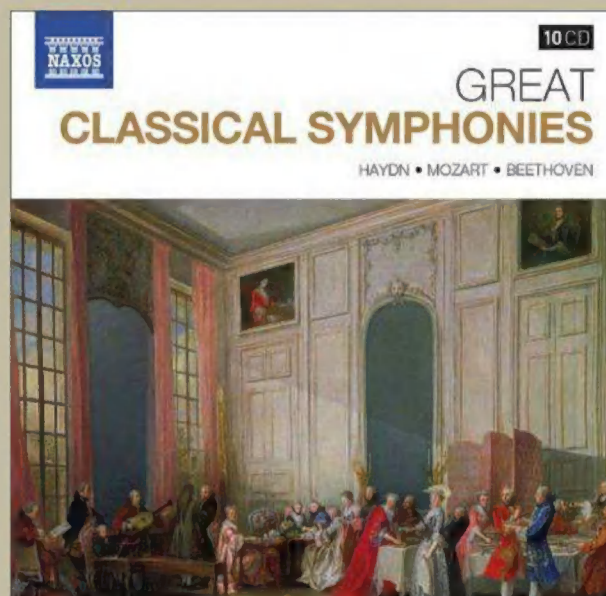
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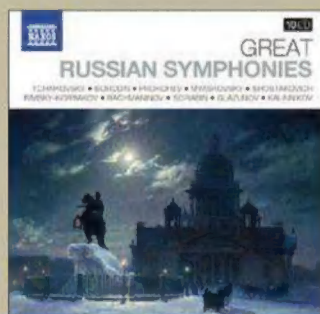
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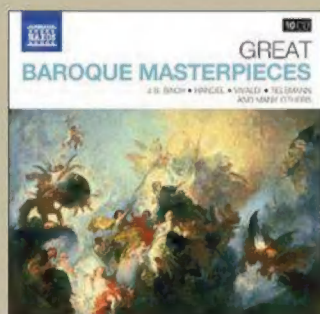
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*'A modern piano isn't better than Mozart's piano, it's just different. It's fine to have modern people write new music for what old instruments can do' — Nicholas McGegan*

one of the treasures of the orchestra's legacy: a luminous performance of Berlioz's *Les nuits d'été* recorded live in 1995 with the late Lorraine Hunt Lieberson as soloist. That highly praised release was followed by three Haydn symphonies, Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*, Handel's *Atalanta* – and now, coming in October, Brahms's two orchestral serenades.

'This is the kind of thing people think is pretty radical, until they see what's going on in Europe,' says McGegan. 'I mean, this season at the Proms you had John Eliot Gardiner doing *Pelléas et Mélisande* on period instruments. So when people say, "Oh, you're doing Schumann; couldn't you do more Telemann recorder concertos?" I say, "Actually, we're kind of behind the curve on all this."'

McGegan sees it as his task to expand boundaries. 'Early music audiences are finicky. We used to get hate mail when we did Mozart and Beethoven. Or people say to me, "I used to come to your concerts but you do too much choral music, so I don't come." They have very precise tastes. So my job is to make a season to annoy everyone.'

In truth, of course, McGegan's rapport with audiences is one of the orchestra's chief assets. At 62, he's small and effervescent with a bouncy podium manner, and his performances boast a rhythmic vitality and showmanship that impress even the casual listener. 'Nic's ebullience and musicality have allowed the orchestra to grow and expand in the most beautiful way,' says violinist Katherine Kyme.

The history of PBO is steeped in the cultural history of the Bay Area. It was founded in Berkeley by harpsichordist Laurette Goldberg and three associates, and was devoted to the kind of communal processes characteristic of that place and time. 'Rehearsals were run like a Quaker meeting,' says McGegan. 'Everyone had their say, so they'd get nothing done. I was brought in because they needed a benign tyrant.'

In addition to the extended deliberation, many of the performers were picking up the principles of early music practice on the fly. 'There was not a lot of instruction back then,' says violinist Blumenstock. 'There were records that you could listen to and absorb as a sort of aural tradition. But today we have players auditioning who have been through the early music programmes at Juilliard or Bloomington. I think one of the reasons the early music movement had a hard time being accepted in the US was that in Europe the people doing it, like Nikolaus Harnoncourt, were already at the top of their game. The people who took it up here were like me – 19-year-old students who were just figuring it out.' McGegan instilled a necessary

discipline and established certain rudiments of concert protocol ('They were wearing black shirts with purple sashes; after I came, we wore tails'). He inaugurated a regular chorus, the Philharmonia Chorale, in 1995, and expanded the roster of guest artists to include such luminaries as Jordi Savall, Susan Graham and Marion Verbruggen. He also rotated the orchestra's key violinists through the concertmaster's chair over the course of a season.

'If you're in London you can play in four or five Baroque orchestras. But here, if you're the only show in town, and one person is the concertmaster, then no one else has a hope of taking a solo or playing a larger role. Plus, when we widened the rep, we got to the point where certain people were better leading some repertoire and not others.'

McGegan also brought his distinctively explosive interpretative style to an orchestra that had been devoted to courtier, more Continental rhythms and articulation. 'Nic always seemed a little impatient with hierarchies of strong and weak beats,' says Blumenstock. 'That felt fussy, and it interrupted the forward thrust of a phrase. His approach is more emotional than cerebral, and makes it easier to generate vivid effects.'

That vivacity pays off not just in music of the 18th and 19th centuries, but in contemporary fare as well: the PBO has unveiled two works by Bay Area composers. Jake Heggie, the composer of the operas *Dead Man Walking* and *Moby-Dick*, wrote *To Hell and Back*, a 2006 polystylistic theatrical work combining the classical vocal technique of soprano Isabel Bayrakdarian with the Broadway stylings of Patti Lupone. That was followed three years later by *Into the Bright Lights*, Nathaniel Stookey's settings of autobiographical texts by the mezzo Frederica von Stade.

There are no plans for further commissions, although McGegan is open to the idea. 'I don't think there's progress in instruments,' he says. 'A modern piano isn't better than Mozart's piano, it's just different. The Baroque flute can do *glissandos* that a modern flute can't, and it's fine to have modern people write new music for what old instruments can do.'

Having recently given up his post at the Göttingen International Handel Festival after 21 years as artistic director, McGegan has even more time to focus on planning upcoming PBO seasons. This season will include concert performances of Handel's *Teseo*, and McGegan has nurtured a longstanding desire to tackle Rameau's opera-ballet *Le temple de la gloire*. He also has his eye on Vivaldi's *Juditha Triumphans*, which boasts an all-female cast, a viola d'amore, mandolin and an early clarinet.

'I'm trying to keep the orchestra from an image that says it's respectable and "authentic"' – said with a touch of irony – 'as opposed to exciting and fun. There's this idea that if you want to be authentic, as a conductor you mustn't give your own interpretation. But I just do the piece as I think it should be done. I like people to come out of a concert saying, "Gosh, that was great!" rather than, "Gosh, that was correct!" We're entertainers – and you can't entertain by righteousness.' 6

## PICK OF THE 2012-13 OPENING SEASON

**November 8-10, 8pm; November 11, 7.30pm**

Fortepianist Emanuel Ax joins the orchestra for an all-Beethoven programme featuring the Fourth Piano Concerto and Fourth Symphony

**March 15, 16 & 20, 8pm; March 17, 7.30pm**

Rachel Podger is violin soloist and leader in a programme devoted to concertos by Corelli, Vivaldi, Mossi, Pergolesi and Locatelli

**April 10, 11 & 13, 7.30pm; April 14, 4pm**

Handel's *Teseo*, with Amanda Forsythe, Dominique Labelle and Céline Ricci (*sops*) and Robin Blaze (*ct*)

Performances are in San Francisco, Berkeley, Atherton and Stanford, California. For more information, visit

**philharmonia.org**



# THE SCENE

Houston welcomes an *Italian Girl in Algiers* co-produced by three European houses; Beethoven abounds in Dallas, Chicago, Toronto and New York; and Petrenko conducts Shostakovich in LA



*Clemenza di Tito*: conductor Harry Bicket returns to the Met in New York to conduct Mozart's opera of political intrigue, starring Elina Garanča and Barbara Frittoli

## HOUSTON

### Houston Grand Opera

**Rossini: *The Italian Girl in Algiers* (October 26 - November 11)**

Rossini's opera of harems, pirates and high-jinx escapades arrives in Houston as part of its co-production tour by Madrid's Teatro Real, Florence's Maggio Musicale and the Opera National de Bordeaux. Joan Font directs the piece, with sets and costumes by Joan Guillén. Daniela Barcellona and Lawrence Brownlee star as Isabella and Lindoro, lovers separated by a shipwreck, while Patrick Carfizzi sings the role of Algerian bey Mustafà, determined to marry Isabella himself. Carlo Rizzi conducts.

[houstongrandopera.org](http://houstongrandopera.org)

## NEW YORK

### White Light Festival

**Emanuel Ax (November 4)**

**Latvian Radio Choir (November 16-17)**

**Philharmonia Orchestra (November 18)**

Lincoln Center's White Light Festival, focusing on the convergence of art and spirituality,

returns for its third year starting in October.

In November, pianist Emanuel Ax plays the Prelude and Fugue from Bach's *Well-tempered Clavier* and Schoenberg's Six Little Piano Pieces. Mezzo-soprano Tamara Mumford, tenor Russell Thomas and musicians of the New York Philharmonic unite with Ax under conductor Matthias Pintscher for a chamber version of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* in the same concert. The Latvian Radio Choir picks up the classical thread of the multidisciplinary festival at both Manhattan's Church of St Mary the Virgin and Alice Tully Hall. The latter setting also hosts the Sinfonietta Riga under Tonu Kaljuste in an all-Arvo Pärt programme. The night before marks the Latvian Radio Choir's - and conductor Sigvards Kjava's - US debut with a collection of works including Peteris Vask's *Ziles Zina*, Ligeti's *Lux Aeterna* and Knut Nystedt's *Immortal Bach*. The festival closes on November 18 at Avery Fisher Hall with Esa-Pekka Salonen leading the UK's Philharmonia Orchestra in Mahler's Ninth. [whitelightfestival.org](http://whitelightfestival.org)

## DALLAS

### The Dallas Symphony

**Beethoven: Symphony No 5;**

**Korngold: Violin Concerto (November 1-4)**

**Britten: War Requiem (November 8-10)**

Violinist Hilary Hahn joins Jaap van Zweden and his orchestra to play Korngold's autumnal and gem-toned violin concerto, bookended by Beethoven's Fifth and *Leonore* Overture No 3. The following week, Maestro van Zweden returns to the podium with soprano Olga Guryakova, tenor Ian Bostridge and baritone Dietrich Henschel with the Dallas Symphony Chorus and Children's Chorus of Greater Dallas for Britten's *War Requiem*, aptly timed in advance of Veteran's Day. [dallassymphony.com](http://dallassymphony.com)

## CHICAGO

### Chicago Symphony Orchestra

**Beethoven: Symphony No 7 (November 8-11)**

Gil Shaham has dedicated himself to an open-ended project exploring violin concertos written in the 1930s, a decade of turmoil in



Europe that nevertheless managed to produce no fewer than 14 significant concertos. He brings William Walton's contribution to the canon to Chicago, alongside Britten's *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* (featured prominently in Wes Anderson's recent film *Moonrise Kingdom*) and Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. Charles Dutoit conducts. [cso.org](http://cso.org)

## NEW YORK

### Metropolitan Opera

**Verdi: Un ballo in maschera**  
(November 8 - December 14)

**Mozart: La clemenza di Tito**  
(November 16 - December 10)

Verdi's Swedish-set, Boston-transplanted *Un ballo*, an opera about love in the time of politics, gets an update from iconoclastic director David Alden, trading ermine robes for eerie lighting in the name of creating a dream-like state for the characters. Fabio Luisi leads a cast starring Sondra Radvanovsky, Dmitri Hvorostovsky and Marcelo Álvarez in the central love triangle. Dolora Zajick and Stephanie Blythe trade off as Ulrica and Kathleen Kim sings the page role of Oscar. Then, later in the same month, Harry Bicket returns to the Met to conduct a revival of Mozart's own political intrigue, here starring Elina Garanča as Sesto, Giuseppe Filianoti as Tito and Barbara Frittoli as Vitellia. [metopera.org](http://metopera.org)

## ATLANTA

### Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

**Stravinsky: The Firebird**  
(November 8-10)

Composer-conductors are omnipresent in the States this month (see Boston Symphony Orchestra and LA Chamber Orchestra). In Atlanta, Matthias Pintscher conducts his work *Towards Osiris* in a concert that also features Ravel's *Rapsodie Espagnole* and Stravinsky's *Firebird* Suite. The Mozart connection in Pintscher's own work is felt in Wolfgang's Violin Concerto No 5, played by Karen Gomyo. [atlantasymphony.org](http://atlantasymphony.org)

## WASHINGTON, DC

### The Kennedy Center

**Angela Meade (November 10)**

Fast-rising soprano Angela Meade makes her Washington National Opera debut in the spring with her signature role as Bellini's

*Norma*. Prior to that, she offers Washingtonians a taste of her considerable talents in a recital at the Terrace Theater, courtesy of WNO. Bradley Moore accompanies Meade at the keyboard for an evening of songs by Strauss and Liszt, plus arias from Mozart, Verdi and, of course, Bellini.

[kennedy-center.org](http://kennedy-center.org)

## LOS ANGELES

### Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra

**Beethoven: Symphony No 2 (November 10-11)**

Benjamin Wallfisch features twice this weekend: not only does he conduct the LACO but is also featured on the programme with the world premiere of his violin concerto. The work is played by LACO violinist Tereza Stanislav, for whom it was commissioned in celebration of her 10 years with the orchestra. Wallfisch also conducts Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro for Strings* and Beethoven's Symphony No 2.

[laco.org](http://laco.org)

## MONTREAL

### Opéra de Montréal

**Wagner: The Flying Dutchman**  
(November 10-17)

The Wagner bicentennial resounds across North America this season, here in the form of his own take on the lass who loved a sailor. Thomas Gazheli is the eponymous role of the ghostly sea captain, Maida Hundeling sings Senta and Endrik Wottrich plays Erik. A production originally helmed for the Canadian Opera Company by Christopher Alden, this import is remounted by Marilyn Gronsdal, with sets and costumes by Allen Moyer.

[operademontreal.com](http://operademontreal.com)

## SAN FRANCISCO

### San Francisco Symphony

**The Warsaw Philharmonic (November 11-12)**

The San Francisco Symphony plays host to the Warsaw Philharmonic (both formed in the first few years of the 20th century) along with conductor Antoni Wit and pianist Yulianna Avdeeva. The Polish connection is heightened on the first night of their residency with Chopin's Piano Concerto No 2; the programme also features Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* Symphony. The second evening focuses on Beethoven's *Emperor* Piano Concerto No 5 and Dvořák's Symphony No 8.

[sfsymphony.org](http://sfsymphony.org)

## CHICAGO

### Lyric Opera of Chicago

**Massenet: Werther (November 11-26)**

Massenet's take on Goethe's unlucky-in-love poet stars Matthew Polenzani, last heard at the Lyric in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* last fall. Polenzani stars opposite Sophie Koch, who makes her debut with the company after singing the role across Europe. Kiri Deonarine sings Sophie and Craig Verm is Albert. Music director Sir Andrew Davis conducts a performance (his first go at the opera) directed by Francisco Negrin and designed by Louis Désiré, who seeks to blend the heat of the French score with the chill of its Yuletide setting in this co-production with San Francisco Opera. [lyricopera.org](http://lyricopera.org)

## TORONTO

### Toronto Symphony Orchestra

**Beethoven: Triple Concerto (November 14-15)**

TSO concertmaster Jonathan Crow, cellist Shauna Rolston and pianist André Laplante form the triumvirate behind Beethoven's Triple Concerto. Preceding the work is another piece centred on the rule of three, French-Canadian composer Pierre Mercure's *Triptyque*. Closing out the evening is Shostakovich's Symphony No 12, *The Year 1917*, which explores the Bolshevik Revolution in a way that only Shostakovich could pull off. Music director Peter Oundjian conducts.

[tso.ca](http://tso.ca)

## CHAPEL HILL, NEW YORK, COSTA MESA

### Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique and Monteverdi Choir

**All-Beethoven (November 14-20)**

Coinciding with their new recording of Beethoven's Symphonies No 5 and 7 on the Soli Deo Gloria label, Sir John Eliot Gardiner takes his players on the road with two all-Beethoven programmes. A tour that takes over Europe in September and October makes its way to the States in November, and while the offerings in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, are still up in the air, they're sure to be culled from at least one of the programmes that will be heard in both New York's Carnegie Hall and Costa Mesa, California. The first night in New York (reprised the second night in California) starts with the composer's *Meeresstille und glückliche Fahrt* before diving into Symphony No 9. New York's second night



Vasily Petrenko: brings his masterly reading of Shostakovich to Los Angeles



(and California's first) is dedicated to *Missa Solemnis*. Both this and the Ninth feature soprano Rebecca Evans, mezzo Jennifer Johnston, tenor Michael Spyres and bass Matthew Rose.

[monteverdi.co.uk](http://monteverdi.co.uk)

## BOSTON

### **Boston Symphony Orchestra**

#### **Sibelius, Adès and Prokofiev (November 15-17)**

Thomas Adès, omnipresent on the East Coast this season as both conductor and composer, leads the Boston Symphony Orchestra with his own *In Seven Days*, a concerto for piano and orchestra with accompanying video art. At the keyboard is Kirill Gerstein, who also plays Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No 1. On tap, too, is soprano Dawn Upshaw to perform *Luonnotar* by Sibelius, who is also heard in the concert's final work, his Sixth Symphony.

[bsa.org](http://bsa.org)

## MINNEAPOLIS

### **Minnesota Orchestra**

#### **Copland: Clarinet Concerto (November 15-17)**

Twentieth-century music dominates this programme, which features Swedish clarinetist Martin Fröst playing Copland's Clarinet Concerto and the orchestra offering Bartók's *The Miraculous Mandarin*. Fröst also joins Osmo Vänskä and his players for Mozart's Serenade No 11 and Anders Hillborg's 2000 work *Peacock Tales*, described as a 'monodrama' for clarinet soloist, orchestra and dance. Given Fröst's proclivity for the atypical and non-traditional, it's no wonder that he's the dedicatee of such a work.

[minnesotaorchestra.org](http://minnesotaorchestra.org)

## NEW YORK

### **Carnegie Hall**

#### **Pierre-Laurent Aimard (November 15)**

#### **Joyce DiDonato (November 18)**

With the 150th birthday of Debussy on the horizon, French pianist Pierre-Laurent Aimard turns his focus to his compatriot for his newest Deutsche-Grammophon recording as well as his return to Carnegie Hall. His solo recital pairs Debussy's Preludes, Book II with Schumann's Symphonic Etudes and Heinz Holliger's *Elis (Three Night Pieces)*. A few days later, mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato takes over Stern Auditorium for *Drama Queens*, an evening

of arias written for royals in Baroque opera.

For this, she's joined by violinist Dmitry Sinkovsky and Il Complesso Barocco, bringing with them the music of Handel, Gluck, Monteverdi, Hasse and more.

[carnegiehall.org](http://carnegiehall.org)

## MIAMI

### **Cleveland Orchestra**

#### **Mahler: Symphony No 3 (November 16-17)**

As part of the Cleveland Orchestra's five-year-strong part-time stint in Florida, their 2012-13 residency starts off with Mahler's Third Symphony. Music director Franz Welser-Möst conducts with vocalists coming from the University of Miami Frost Symphonic Women's Chorus, the Women of the Master Chorale of South Florida and the Miami Children's Chorus. Argentinian mezzo-soprano Bernarda Fink guest-stars as the soloist.

[clevelandorchestramiami.com](http://clevelandorchestramiami.com)

## MONTREAL

### **Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal**

#### **Music & Time (November 20-22)**

Perpetual rhythm and motion is the name of the game for this programme, which includes the OSM premieres of Steve Reich's *Clapping Music* and Ligeti's *Poème symphonique* for 100 metronomes. In between, there's Haydn's *Clock* Symphony No 101, the churning waters of Smetana's 'Vltava' and Bartók's driving Piano Concerto No 3. Kent Nagano conducts this continuation of his Haydn symphonic cycle, while Jean-Efflam Bavouzet joins in for the Bartók.

[osm.ca](http://osm.ca)

## KANSAS CITY

### **Kansas City Symphony**

#### **Beethoven: Pastoral Symphony**

#### **(November 23-25)**

There's a distinct invocation of nature in the three works that mark the Kansas City Symphony debuts of conductor Osmo Vänskä

and pianist Lise de la Salle. Noted for his Sibelius interpretations, Vänskä starts things off with the composer's Finnish tone poem *En saga*. De la Salle joins for Prokofiev's decidedly autumnal Piano Concerto No 1. The finale is perhaps the most overtly natural work: Beethoven's *Pastoral* Symphony No 6.

[kcsymphony.org](http://kcsymphony.org)

## LOS ANGELES

### **Los Angeles Philharmonic**

#### **Shostakovich: Symphony No 10**

#### **(November 23-25)**

Vasily Petrenko's Shostakovich recordings have, in short order, come to be regarded as definitive contemporary takes on the composer's symphonies (he's blazing through the full cycle with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra for Naxos). He takes that talent to Los Angeles to lead Dudamel's orchestra in the composer's Tenth, a work that was written shortly after the death of Stalin and which teems with irony and optimism. Petrenko also conducts Nielsen's *Maskarade* Overture and Grieg's Piano Concerto, the latter featuring Macedonian up-and-coming pianist Simon Trpčeski.

[laphil.com](http://laphil.com)

## BOSTON

### **Handel and Haydn Society**

#### **Handel: Messiah (November 30 - December 2)**

In a season laden with *Messiahs*, Boston's historically informed early music group gets a head start on the Handelian festivities – in its 159th year performing the work. Harry Christophers leads the period-instrument ensemble, which is joined here by soprano Karina Gauvin, tenor James Gilchrist, bass Sumner Thompson and, in a unique twist on the mezzo tradition, countertenor Daniel Taylor.

[handelandhaydn.org](http://handelandhaydn.org)

**Previews by Olivia Giovetti**

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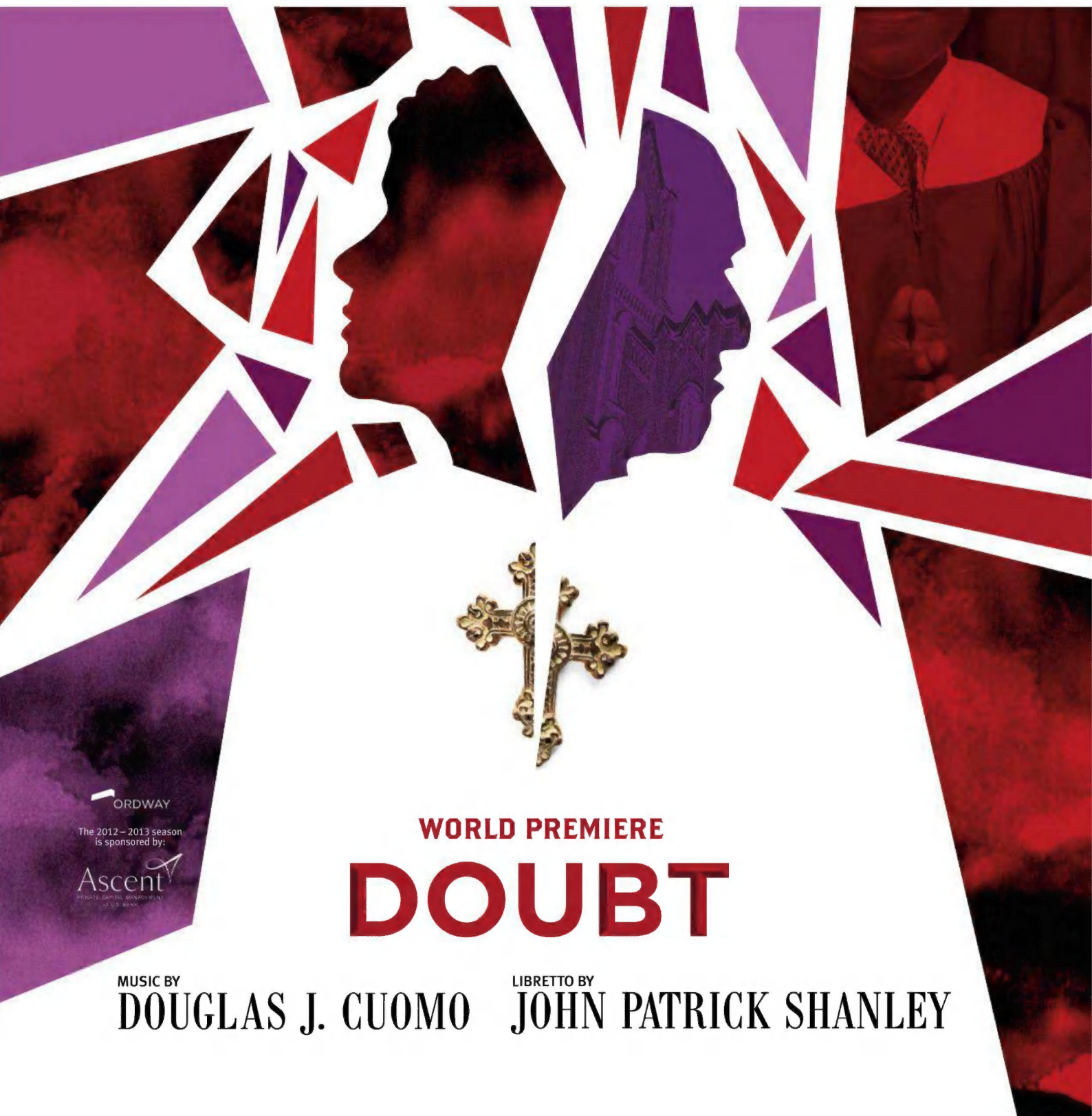
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# Reviews



## Donald Rosenberg reviews the Bach of violinist Cecylia Arzewski:

*'Arzewski possesses the kind of clarity, elasticity and tonal focus that honour the music's penetrating content'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE IX**



## Ken Smith on the revival of a 19th-century female composer:

*'Maslovacic has unearthed neglected works worth hearing, earning her a well-deserved explorer's hat'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE XI**

### JS Bach

Solo Violin Sonatas and Partitas, BWV1001-06

Cecylia Arzewski *vn*

Bridge © 2 BRIDGE9358 (127' • DDD)



#### Bach Everests from eminent concertmaster Arzewski

In the booklet-note for her recording of Bach's Solo Violin Sonatas and Partitas, Cecylia Arzewski strikes notes that are touching and wise in their humility: 'Everything I have accomplished so far has proven to me to be insufficient...My goal in these recordings was to be as true as possible (on a modern violin and bow) to Bach's style.'

Considering that the Polish-born violinist has served in prominent positions in the Boston Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra and Atlanta Symphony (the last as longtime concertmaster), her statement about accomplishment must be viewed as a daring musical confession. Her artistry is far more than sufficient in Bach's solo violin monuments and she clearly invested bountiful study and preparation before setting down for posterity her probing thoughts on these seminal works. Her performances are exemplary in technique and expressive detail, and have a commanding sense of phrasing, architecture and articulation that keeps the narratives on a striking forward trajectory.

Each sonata and partita emerges with fierce commitment and attention to subtleties of shading and tempo. Although Arzewski is admittedly not a Baroque specialist, she possesses the kind of clarity, elasticity and tonal focus (minus modern-instrument layers of vibrato) that honour the music's penetrating content.

The major test for any violinist in these works is the Chaconne that ends the Second Partita – an epic display of compositional virtuosity in variation form. Arzewski invests the movement with powerful and expressive urgency, maintaining a dramatic through-line that grips the ear. All told, a magnificent accomplishment. **Donald Rosenberg**

### Del Tredici

'Complete Piano Works, Vol 1'

Aeolian Ballade. Ballad in Lavender. Ballad in Yellow (after García Lorca). Gotham Glory (Four Scenes of New York City). S/M Ballade

Marc Peloquin *pf*

Naxos American Classics © 8 559680 (80' • DDD)



#### Del Tredici champion begins complete piano works series

Remember the 'New Romanticism' movement that blossomed in the '70s and '80s? That's when several serial composers decided 'to hell with political correctness, we're going to write tonal music'. David Del Tredici was one of them, and started with large-scale pieces for soprano and orchestra, inspired by *Alice in Wonderland*, that certain critics likened to Richard Strauss on LSD.

Likewise, the Romantic tradition runs amok throughout Del Tredici's recent piano works (he's a brilliant virtuoso in his own right), leaving no keyboard icon unscathed. Schumann's *Kreisleriana* proudly bubbles underneath *Ballad in Lavender's* thick yet never fatty surface. Composed in 2008, *Aeolian Ballade* is a rigorously structured, emotionally freewheeling prelude and fugue, although the *S/M Ballade* from two years earlier charts more ambitious, technically daunting territory. By contrast, *Ballad in Yellow's* relatively modest keyboard layout reflects its origin as an art song. Each of *Gotham Glory's* four movements reflects a specific aspect or place in New York City, where the composer has lived for more than 40 years. There's a lyrically disarming prelude ('West Village Morning'), a French-overture-inspired fugue ('Museum Piece') and a slowly building, slightly severe two-voice canon ('Missing Towers'). Wollman Rink is depicted by an over-the-top, 17-minute fantasia on Waldteufel's *The Skater's Waltz*, where the venerable theme competes with ruthless scales and arpeggios as if it were skating in the subway at rush hour.

A longtime Del Tredici champion and associate, pianist Marc Peloquin imbues these

composer-supervised performances with idiomatic aplomb and a powerful yet flexible technique. The sound is clear and analytical, although slightly dry for music that would benefit from more ambient resonance. Still, it accurately reflects Peloquin's huge sound. This is the first of a projected three-disc series encompassing Del Tredici's complete piano music and I look forward to future instalments.

Jed Distler

### Liebermann

Cello Sonatas – No 1, Op 3; No 2, Op 61; No 3, Op 90; No 4, Op 108. Album Leaf, Op 66

Dmitri Atapine *vc* Adela Hyeyeon Park *pf*

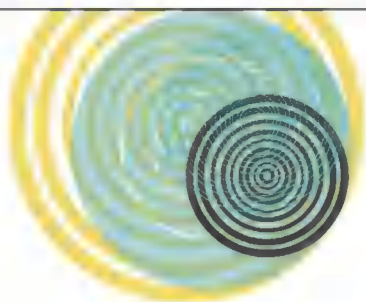
Blue Griffin © BLGF255 (61' • DDD)



#### Argenta Trio's cellist plays sonatas spanning 30 years

In four sonatas written over 30 years, Lowell Liebermann indulges the cello's penchant for long lines in which colour, nuance and phrasing count for as much as actual melodies; for Liebermann, making and maintaining contact with the audience seems to be his primary concern. Cellist Dmitri Atapine compounds matters by identifying so closely with the music's mostly tonal flow and 2012 sense of *portamento* – exploratory rather than merely expressive – that the result is outright seduction. While Atapine is taking command with brilliant technical chops and a free, broad way with the phrasing, Adela Hyeyeon Park is doing her part with precision, power and tremendous glee; good thing too, for Liebermann allots the pianist plenty to do, including lovely *legato* passages, colourful percussive effects and mock-heroic jokes.

Beyond their sharing Lowell Liebermann's mind, each sonata has its own story to tell. The Second, for example, was written in 1998 with Steven Isserlis and Stephen Hough in mind, based on themes from the composer's opera *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. It's not all spaced-out meandering: the last four minutes take off in an exhilarating, seemingly out-of-control *moto perpetuo* featuring insanely difficult



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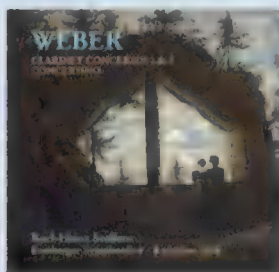


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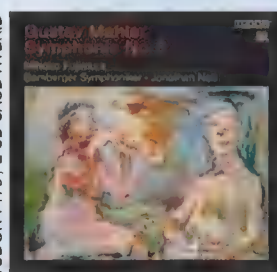
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passages in thirds for the cello matched by stupefying, mechanistic blocks of piano sound.

The Third Sonata, commissioned in 2006 on the occasion of a life insurance executive's 90th birthday, includes an intrusion by Bach/Gounod's *Ave Maria* as a prelude to launching unaccountably into Shostakovich-like delirium. The Fourth was written two years later for Joel Sandelson, a 13-year-old prodigy.

Atapine's dispassionate booklet-notes comprise a verbal road map to the four sonatas and the harmless *Album Leaf*. The recordings, rich in detail and sonority, were made in Blue Griffin's studio in Lansing, Michigan, known as The Ballroom. **Laurence Vittes**

## Lofstrom

'Concertino'

Concertinos - for Oboe and Orchestra<sup>a</sup>; for Harp and Orchestra<sup>b</sup>. The Plumed Serpent<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Jennet Ingle *ob* <sup>b</sup>Kelsey Molinari *hp*

<sup>ab</sup>New Philharmonic Orchestra / Kirk Muspratt;

'Studio Orchestra' / Doug Lofstrom

Origin Classical © OC33014 (41' • DDD)

Recorded <sup>c</sup>1982, <sup>ab</sup>2011

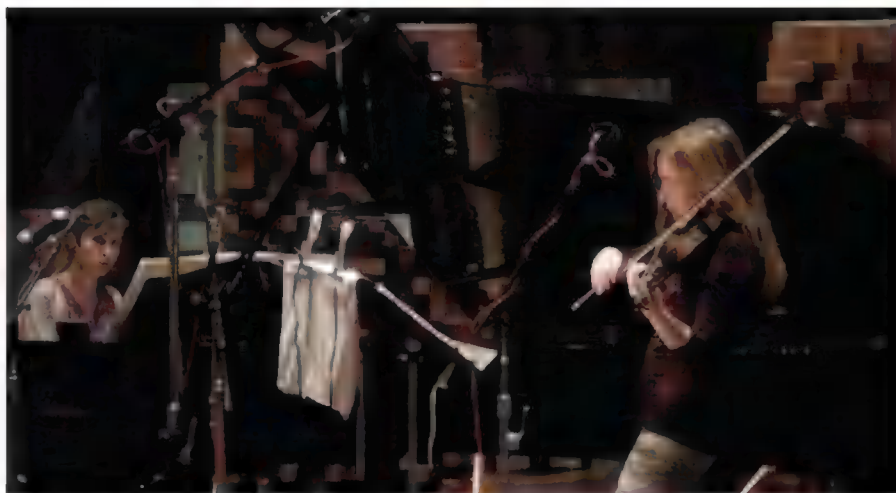


### Recordings new and old from Chicago tunesmith Lofstrom

Chicago composer Doug Lofstrom has coupled first recordings of two modestly appealing orchestral concertinos for oboe and harp with an archival reprise of his *Plumed Serpent* studio fantasy from 30 years ago. There isn't much in either Concertino that hasn't been heard before – Richard Strauss and Hollywood musicals come to mind, though more svelte, brought up to date and internationalised – but they are both beautifully written for the soloists and exquisitely played.

The reissue of *The Plumed Serpent* revisits an exuberant outpouring of youthful lyricism and cool jazz, circa the early Reagan years. The language is sophisticated, the structure almost invisible but leading inevitably to solo riffs by soprano saxophonist Rich Corplongo, drummer Rick Shandling, pianist Pete Sliwka and flugelhorn player Jim Teister. *Serpent* was recorded by some of Chicago's finest in 1982 as a four-movement 'jazz concerto' for quintet and 'studio orchestra' (eight strings). The piece is based on the folklore and history of Mexico and Native America, using the mythical 'Plumed Serpent' Quetzalcoatl as a focal point, which explains the flashes of Latin colour.

The vivid, occasionally strident sound of *The Plumed Serpent* fits tastes of 30 years ago when digital was new and raw, an essential part of the overall recorded mix and exuberant fun. This means a very wide dynamic range – so sit near the volume control. The sound of the concertinos is excellent. **Laurence Vittes**



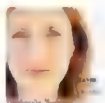
Reviving Mayer (first admired, then neglected): Anne-Lise Longuemare, piano, and Aleksandra Maslovaric, violin

## E Mayer

Violin Sonatas – Op 18; Op 19; in E flat

Aleksandra Maslovaric *vn* Anne-Lise Longuemare *pf*

Feminae © 845 01722 54 (74' • DDD)



### Three unheard sonatas by 19th-century German Mayer

Taking her artist statement in the booklet-notes at face value, violinist Aleksandra Maslovaric is a rugged musical adventurer. She certainly leaves no stone unturned in the music itself, poring over each lyrical line with loving care (the piano and violin sound are deftly delineated and vibrantly rendered). But the fact that she has managed to unearth some genuinely neglected works worth hearing – in one case going back to the unpublished manuscript – certainly earns her a well-deserved explorer's hat.

Emilie Mayer (1812–83) was one of a number of women who, in the accepted parlance of the Romantic era, 'composed music like a man'. Not being married, she was free of the spousal jealousy of Alma Mahler or Clara Schumann; nor did she have a brother like Fanny Mendelssohn's discouraging her from publishing her work. As such, Mayer's output – admired in her lifetime, utterly neglected thereafter – included eight symphonies and at least 15 concert overtures in addition to a shelf full of chamber music and *Lieder*.

These three sonatas cover a wide swathe of stylistic history. The Sonata in E flat, the earliest piece here, still has its feet planted firmly in the late Classical era, while the sonatas in E minor and A minor (Opp 19 and 18 respectively) open and close this recording by reaching ahead with more Romantic abandon.

Not too much abandon, however. Compared with Clara Schumann or Fanny Mendelssohn, Mayer's music takes fewer chances, favouring craft over fresh ideas. That craft alone, though,

is enough to justify an admirable hearing by a performer with such genuine commitment.

**Ken Smith**

## 'Connections'

Chausson *Pièce*, Op 39 Debussy *Cello Sonata*

Fauré *Pavillon*, Op 77 Franck *Violin (Cello) Sonata*

Winona Zelenka *vc* Connie Shih *pf*

Marquis © MAR427 (54' • DDD)



### Canadian duo connect Gallic cello-piano works in Toronto

Chausson's seldom-encountered *Pièce* in G minor, Op 39, was written near the end of his life, in 1897, and could be his epitaph. In eight timeless minutes, it catches the ear with one of his characteristically heartbreaking tunes, like falling in love, until Chausson glides into a minimalist, autopilot space in which he lavishes his affection on the cello in the form of wonderfully long, meandering and ecstatically resolved lines. This is all done with a remarkable simplicity of means, the music's ABA form leading to excursions through pleasant harmonic landscapes before returning, as if in a memory, to the beautiful opening melody. Zelenka and Shih, in addition to making many very gorgeous sounds, seem caught up themselves in the unfamiliar music's beauty.

Although the duo's measured performance of the Debussy loses something in perfumed Gallic flair, it gains both in nobility and sweep which, unexpectedly, emphasises the music's mysterious longing. And yet, even as Zelenka is applying her tawny sexuality to the marvellous last 25 seconds of the second movement, she still saves enough for a positivistically healthy ending. The Franck also profits from Zelenka's tonal embrace and ample phrasing, matched like velvet in a glove by Shih. Zelenka does what she can for Fauré's sweet, innocent

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Getting the place buzzing: the Grant Park Chorus sing 'everything with cohesive precision and a spectrum of vocal colours'

*Papillon* once she gets safely past its precious opening curlicues.

The engineers at CBC's Glenn Gould Studio in Toronto have brilliantly captured Zelenka's Alessandro Gagliano of 1710 and the piano's luminous tone. The cellist's own booklet-notes add a nice personal touch. **Laurence Vittes**

### 'The Re-(W)rite of Spring'

**Stravinsky** *The Rite of Spring* (arr Darryl Brenzel)

**Mobtown Modern Big Band**

Innova © INNOVA824 (75' • DDD)



#### Darryl Brenzel's big-band *Rite of Spring* project now on disc

Here's a project that somehow seems both inevitable and redundant. Wasn't the whole of 20th-century music, as more than one critic has quipped, a 'Rewrite of Spring'? This recording, though, should be enough to convince you that Stravinsky did absorb and predict the century's musical currents, just not in the ways that he – or many of his contemporaries – had thought.

Despite the temptation to discard this as some high-concept mash-up of irreconcilable genres – a sort of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Zombies* with better syncopation – Darryl Brenzel's reconception of Stravinsky's seminal ballet score for jazz big band is not entirely without precedent. Stravinsky often dipped into popular idioms, and big-band leaders from Duke Ellington to Maria Schneider have had their share of extended compositions

in their playbook. A project like this has to stand on its own, however, and this one – for the most part – does so. By treating each of Stravinsky's sections as a separate piece, Brenzel runs a gamut of idioms, not just tapping into jazz but matching Russian folk idioms with strains of tango and flamenco. The famous pounding chords in 'Dances of the Young Girls' breaks into a strong rock beat, while the final two tracks juxtapose a quasi-military dance with a bit of '70s funk.

Though this piece runs significantly longer than the ballet score – Stravinsky left little room for solo improvisations – it rarely feels indulgent. If anything, it's a bit too respectful to summon up the brutal power of the original. But with jazz scoring and playing this good, it's a sacrifice I'm prepared to make. **Ken Smith**

### 'Songs of Smaller Creatures'

**Betinis** *Toward Sunshine, Toward Freedom: Songs of Smaller Creatures*

**Kesselman** *Buzzings: Three Pieces About Bees*

**Whitacre** *When David Heard*

**Sleep Garrop** *Sonnets of Desire, Longing, and Whimsy*

**Del Tredici** *Final Alice - Acrostic Song*

**Rorem** *Seven Motets for the Church's Year*

**P Crabtree** *Five Romantic Miniatures*

**Grant Park Chorus / Christopher Bell**

Cedille © CDR90000 131 (61' • DDD • T)

Recorded live at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance, Millennium Park, Chicago, June 38 & 30, 2011



#### Songs of insects and fictional humans from Chicago choir

Choruses are fortunate to tackle all sorts of subjects, from the sacred to the profane and beyond. Not many ensembles can be said to be as imaginative as the Grant Park Chorus – at least on the evidence this new recording, whose references encompass pork chops and insects.

These eight appealing selections (or collections) hail from composers who embrace tonal roots and imagery of poetic and fanciful persuasion. Inventive writing abounds, notably in the honeycombed flights of the insect-inspired works by Betinis and Kesselman.

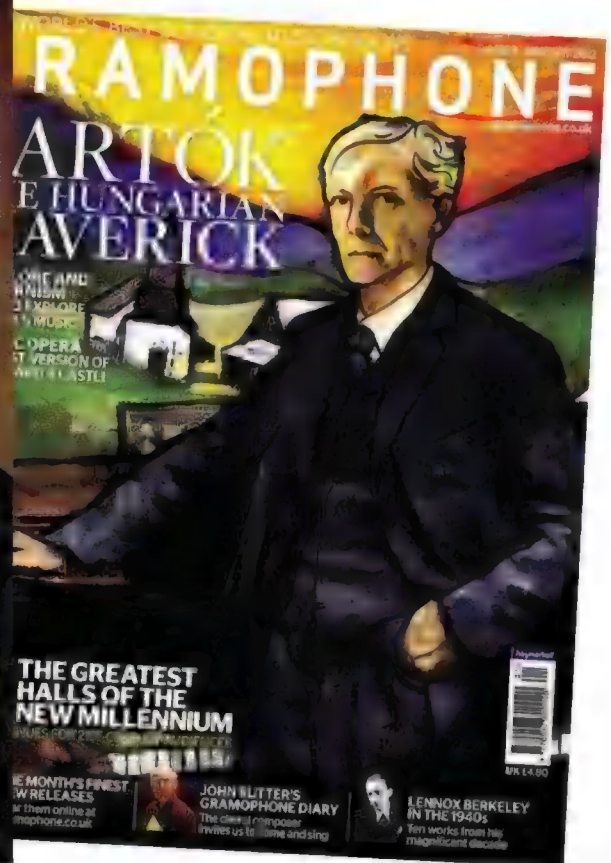
Two works – David Del Tredici's 'Acrostic Song' (from *Final Alice*) and Eric Whitacre's *Sleep* – take the choristers through lines of lulling beauty, while Ned Rorem's *Seven Motets for the Church's Year* and Stacy Garrop's *Sonnets of Desire, Longing, and Whimsy* are luminous reflections of their various texts. Whitacre provides a keen sense of dramatic tension and compassion in *When David Heard*.

The pork chops, you've no doubt been waiting to discover, are served up in Paul Crabtree's *Five Romantic Miniatures*, which portray characters in the satirical animated TV series *The Simpsons* in settings that wrap whimsical ideas in rhapsodic attire.

The Grant Park choristers, led by Christopher Bell, sing everything with cohesive precision and a spectrum of vocal colours. The performances were recorded in concert in Chicago's Millennium Park, but the minimal noise suggests that the audience was glued to every lyrical or zany phrase.

**Donald Rosenberg**

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## THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



**PETER QUANTTRILL** has never talked to or even seen Michael Gielen, of whom he writes in this month's Icon feature, but he wishes he had: 'Audiences and orchestras in the UK and US never took him to their hearts – more fool them. He's revered in Japan, Germany and elsewhere as a man who makes all music sound of our time.'



**JEREMY DIBBLE**, who writes this month's Collection on Butterworth's *A Shropshire Lad* Rhapsody embraced the opportunity to explore the work thoroughly with wholehearted enthusiasm: 'The chance to examine all the available recordings of *A Shropshire Lad* has allowed me to revisit a work that was life-changing in my youth'.



This month's candidate for The Musician and the Score was a complicated one – James MacMillan's *Veni, veni, Emmanuel*. 'It can be hard work getting to the bottom of a piece as flamboyant and complex,' says **HANNAH NEPIL**. 'But MacMillan was only too happy to chew over his compositional strategy – he was very approachable.'



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This is my first *Gramophone* Classical Music Awards as editor of the magazine, though my 11th as a member of the editorial team. In each of these years, as I've watched the vast numbers of recordings whittled down through so many deeply considered (and intensely argued) critical decisions to the winners and, ultimately, the Recording of the Year, I've marvelled at the astonishing artistry, variety and innovation behind the releases each year has offered.

We read about them every month in our reviews pages, of course (in itself only a proportion of all that is released) – but to see them, first as extensive longlists and later, after the first stage of the voting process, as vast numbers of boxes moving via our office from label to critic, is to be reminded of what rich times we live in for classical music recording.

The recording industry may change and evolve year by year as it engages with economic realities but also embraces the opportunities brought about by technological innovation (on which note, find

*'The recording industry may change and evolve year by year as it engages with economic realities but also embraces new technological innovation'*

out on page 29 how you can download selected Awards tracks from iTunes). But nothing but praise can be given to an industry that can offer us, to take just a few examples from this year's Awards contenders, wonderfully performed surveys of early music composers but also insightful performances of core repertoire by the likes of Schumann and Beethoven that make us marvel again at what's revealed in these oft-recorded works. Or a debut recital from a 19-year-old pianist of formidable talent as well as a film of a Bruckner symphony from one of the most revered and respected of today's maestros. Or carefully curated song programmes built around an 18th-century castrato, or the subject of war, as well as a documentary about the history of an American orchestra that is both captivating

and inspiring. I could go on – but turning to the Awards section of this issue will reveal more. We salute the ultimate winners, of course, but they are only part of the story. Explore the shortlists too, all excellent and deserving recordings, and in so doing celebrate – and support – performers, composers and a recording industry, thanks to which our lives are much the richer.

*Martin*

[martin.cullingford@haymarket.com](mailto:martin.cullingford@haymarket.com)



# GRAMOPHONE *Choice*

**G** Informed by our unrivalled panel of critics, we choose the month's must-hear recordings



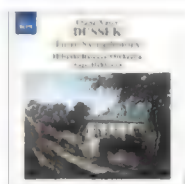
## Recording of the Month

*In Adès's Lieux retrouvés, the sheer panache of the final movement is as persuasive as the tonal refinement preceding it'*

### 'LIEUX RETROUVÉS'

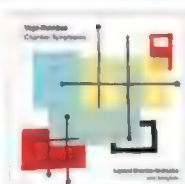
Works for cello and piano by Adès, Fauré, Janáček, Kurtág and Liszt  
**Steven Isserlis** vc **Thomas Adès** pf  
 Hyperion CDA67948

► **ARNOLD WHITTALL'S REVIEW IS ON PAGE 58**



**FX DUSSEK**  
 Four Symphonies  
**Helsinki Baroque Orchestra / Aapo Häkkinen**  
 Naxos 8 572683  
 'Häkkinen is in control of phrase and contour, fetchingly fashioning the music with pithy embellishments from the keyboard.'

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 63**



**HOLMBOE**  
 Chamber Symphonies  
**Lapland Chamber Orchestra / John Storgårds**  
 Dacapo 6 220621  
 'Vagn Holmboe's three Chamber Symphonies are superb encapsulations of his full-orchestral symphonic manner on a small scale.'

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 69**



**STRAVINSKY. HONEGGER. MARTIN**  
 Violin Concertos  
**Baiba Skride** vn  
**BBC NOW / Thierry Fischer**  
 Orfeo C849 121A  
 'The Stravinsky is little short of a revelation, lean and keen, with the kind of inner clarity that you never get in the concert hall.'

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 72**



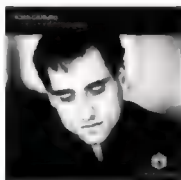
**SVENDSEN**  
 Orchestral Works, Vol 2  
**Truls Mørk** vc  
**Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra / Neeme Järvi**  
 Chandos CHAN10711  
 'Järvi and his Norwegians are on scintillating form and the Cello Concerto and dark reading of the Symphony are to be treasured.'

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 73**



**SHOSTAKOVICH**  
 String Quartets - Nos 3, 4 and 7  
**Meta4**  
 Hänssler Classic CD98 644  
 'Listen to the highly contrapuntal central section of the first movement of the Third Quartet and marvel at the range and precision of colour and articulation.'

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 83**

**PROKOFIEV**

War Sonatas

**Boris Giltburg** *pf*

Orchid ORC100023

'Putting my head above a parapet, I have to say that these performances of Prokofiev's "War" Sonatas (for Richter music that evokes "a world without reason or equilibrium") eclipse all others on record.'

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 89****'STEPHEN HOUGH'S FRENCH ALBUM'**

Piano Works

**Stephen Hough** *pf*

Hyperion CDA67890

'There are some great performances here. Hough can be too coolly objective at times but in this repertoire the expressive simplicity of his playing can make your eyes burn.'

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 93****WAGNER**

Lohengrin

**Soloists; Berlin**
**Radio Choir and  
Symphony Orchestra /  
Marek Janowski**

Pentatone PTC5186 403

'There is a terrifyingly long list of worthwhile *Lohengrin* recordings, to which this newcomer is a serious competitor.'

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 111****'AMORETTI'**

Opera Arias

**Christiane Karg** *sop***Arcangelo /****Jonathan Cohen**

Berlin Classics 0300389BC

'The sparks really fly in the excerpt from *Il sogno di Scipione*, a metaphor aria where Christiane Karg lets rip with some dazzling coloratura.'

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 115****DVD/Blu-ray****CAVALLI**

La Didone

**Soloists; Les Arts****Florissants /William****Christie; Clément****Hervieu-Léger** *dir*

Opus Arte OA1080D;

OABD7106D

'This production makes a good case for what *Grove* calls "a rather uneven work".'

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 109****Reissue/Archive****KHACHATURIAN.****MUSSORGSKY.****RIMSKY-KORSAKOV**

Orchestral Works

**Czech PO /****Zdeněk Chalabala**

Supraphon mono SU4094-2

'Provided you're not monophobic, this exciting release should earn itself a favoured place in your collection.'

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 70****GRAMOPHONE** *Reviews*

*Reviewed this month: 16 Beethoven piano sonatas; 3 Prokofiev piano sonatas; 1 Chopin piano sonata*

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60

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131 Moritzburg music-making: Vogler (left) and Mustonen




*In **Romantique**, Elina Garanča makes a*  
fascinating return to the studio and puts her imprint upon the big Romantic repertoire,  
brilliantly portraying such different heroines as Tchaikovsky's Joan of Arc (The Maid  
of Orléans), Gounod's Sapho and Saint-Saëns' Davla.

Elina Garanča's mezzo-soprano is velvet; she is a stunning figure on stage; her formidable  
technique encompasses repertoire from Mozart and bel canto to dramatic roles  
and contemporary music.

Conductor Yves Abel's penchant for the voice and skill at leading an orchestra  
draws beautiful sound and potent drama from the Filarmonica del Teatro Comunale  
di Bologna. Elina Garanča's rapport with this orchestra is deeper than ever.

"She sings with rich sound, an unerring feel for the nuance and subtext of a  
phrase, and auring renewal." *The New York Times* (January 2010)

**Elina Garanča Romantique**

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## Angèle Dubeau & La Pietà Game Music

ANL CD 28734

Angèle Dubeau is an artist of rare versatility and considered to be one of the most prominent violinists in Canada. Here, accompanied by her all-women string ensemble La Pietà, she performs with virtuosity some of the greatest works from famous video games, such as Chrono Trigger & Chrono Cross, Assassin's Creed: Revelation and Angry Birds' Theme.



## Philippe Sly In Dreams

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Winner of 5 awards at the prestigious Montreal International Musical Competition - Voice 2012.

*"Superb voice, leading man good looks and astounding charisma,"* - La Scena Musicale

*"A beautiful, blooming tone and magnetic stage presence"* - San Francisco Chronicle

*"In Canada there exists a vocal treasure named Philippe Sly, an exceptional baritone!"* - Le Devoir



## Alain Lefèvre Dompierre: 24 Preludes

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Dompierre: 24 Preludes in a boogie-woogie form, and many other things... is the world première recording of these inspired and engaging works composed specifically for master pianist Alain Lefèvre.

*"Dompierre and Lefèvre: The triumph!"* - La Presse

*"Alain Lefèvre, the hero."* - Los Angeles Times



## Ensemble Caprice Bach: Brandenburg Concertos Shostakovich: Preludes Op. 87

ANL-CD-299967

*"An innovative and thought-provoking way to present Bach's Brandenburg Concertos by juxtaposing the work of Shostakovich alongside that of the baroque master. Shostakovich shines unexpectedly on period instruments. The alluring, ethereal harmonies are accentuated, and imitation between the voices and the layering of different melodic lines become wonderfully apparent."* - La Scena Musicale



## Measha Brueggergosman I've Got a Crush on You

TND-CD-KP072

GRAMMY-nominated international opera star and TV personality Measha Brueggergosman crosses boundaries with her new genre-bending album, I've Got A Crush On You. Working with acclaimed arranger Aaron Davis, Brueggergosman gives her take on tracks written by some of Canada's best including Feist, Ron Sexsmith and Joni Mitchell as well as 13 standards.

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## PODCASTS

Tune in to our free podcasts to listen to Martin Cullingford and James Jolly explore the Gramophone Awards shortlists with our critics.

## NEWS AND FEATURES

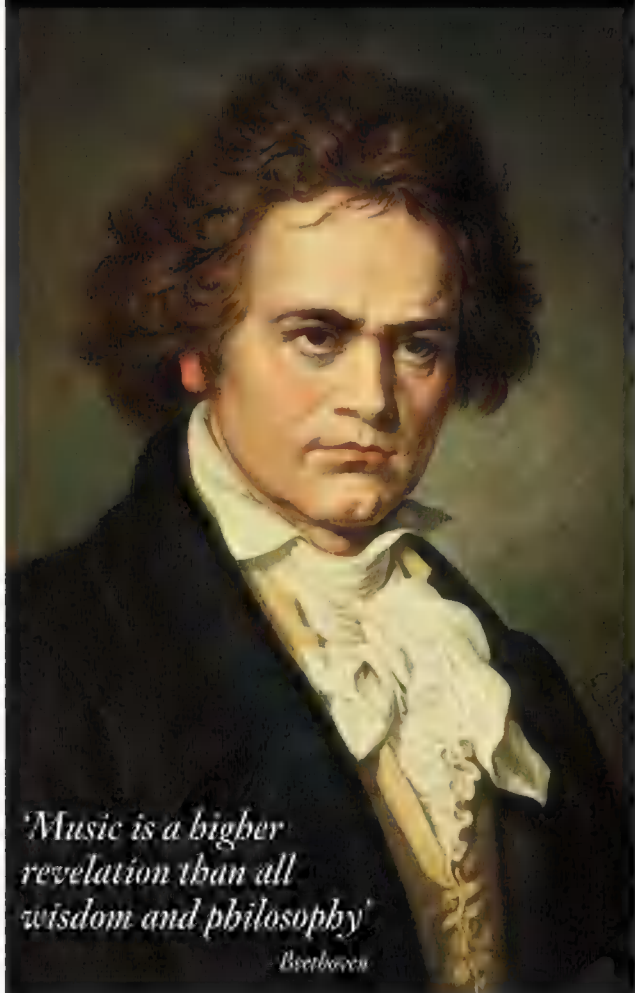
As part of our new series of online features recommending the finest recordings of key works by the great composers, we profile Verdi and Beethoven. Other composers in the series include Mozart, Brahms and Debussy.

## THE GRAMOPHONE PLAYER

Hear tracks from the month's leading releases, including our Recording of the Month.

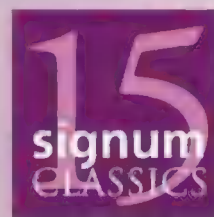
## FACEBOOK, TWITTER & GOOGLE+

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*'Music is a higher  
revelation than all  
wisdom and philosophy'*

Beethoven

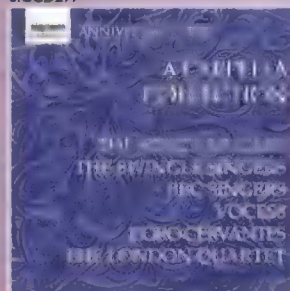


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# PRELUDES

On music, on musicians, on record

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## Quartet in the sky

**Where**  
Argyle Works,  
Birmingham

**The details**  
The staged premiere of  
Stockhausen's *Mittwoch  
aus Licht* as part of the  
London 2012 Festival

Birmingham Opera Company presented the world staged premiere of Stockhausen's complete *Mittwoch aus Licht* in August as part of the London 2012 Festival. The work, which lasts around six hours, is divided into six parts, featuring two choirs, live electronic and acoustic music, plus a string quartet streamed live from four airborne helicopters. Taking part were Ex Cathedra, London Voices, 150 performers from Birmingham Opera and the Elysian String Quartet – whose cellist Laura Moody, shown here, demonstrated not only a head for heights but also admirable contortion skills in her ability to adapt to the cramped cockpit. **G**



# Finding the right balance between the popular and the avant-garde

Programming can be a thorny issue – especially for the opera house or orchestra keen on attracting fresh faces while maintaining its core audience of seasoned punters. Keeping the right balance between tried-and-tested crowd-pleasers while pushing the envelope with contemporary commissions is especially difficult – even without the headache of recession and reduced public funding. So in many ways, the Royal Opera House's decision to programme longer runs of the popular classics in its forthcoming series is an understandable one.

In a recent letter thanking patrons for their support, director of opera Kasper Holten likened the demand for well-known operatic stalwarts to the importance of stocking Penguin Classics in a bookshop – alongside lesser-known works, of course. Holten welcomed this last season's long run of *La traviata* as a success, as 30 per cent of its audiences were new to the Opera House:

'The next seasons will also offer longer runs of popular classics,' he said. 'Some people disagree with this, I know. But as long as they go together with a mix of other programming of new or lesser-known work, I think that this is exactly as it should be; when you go into a bookshop, you also expect it to have the Penguin Classics on the shelves.'

No one would disagree with Holten's desire to 'introduce more people to the incredible experience of opera and to fight to keep the art form accessible'; but, taken in the context of the decision to close ROH2 – the Royal Opera department responsible for programming contemporary and cross-genre works away from the main stage – it is possible the door has been left open for accusations of conservatism.

Still, Holten has been at pains to stress the company's continued commitment to its 'dedicated, critical and knowledgeable core

*'No one would disagree with the Royal Opera's desire to introduce people to the incredible experience of opera'*

audience' and the closure of ROH2, we are assured, will not affect the Royal Opera's modern opera and dance output, which will be 'assimilated into the new artistic management of the Royal Ballet and Royal Opera'. While the recession hits hard and new audiences are at a premium, it can only be right that companies should make sensible changes to stay afloat.

It was in this spirit that the BBC Proms announced that its ever-popular Last Night of the Proms was to be broadcast live in cinemas for the first time on September 8 – and in 3D, no less. Ever mindful of changing public tastes and appetites, the Proms has always managed to tread a satisfyingly diverse path, combining the popular with the avant-garde. The decision to jump on the 3D bandwagon was bound to generate headlines, demonstrating a commitment to attracting audiences more accustomed to the multiplex than the Albert Hall – and offering those seasoned



prommers who had missed out on a ticket the opportunity to experience some of the atmosphere of the event.

Odeon cinemas across the UK played host to the 3D broadcasts, made possible by eight specialist cameras in key positions. A camera in front of conductor Jiří Bělohlávek gave a close-up view of the podium, and a remote camera within the orchestra rotated 180 degrees, giving a 3D view of each instrument.

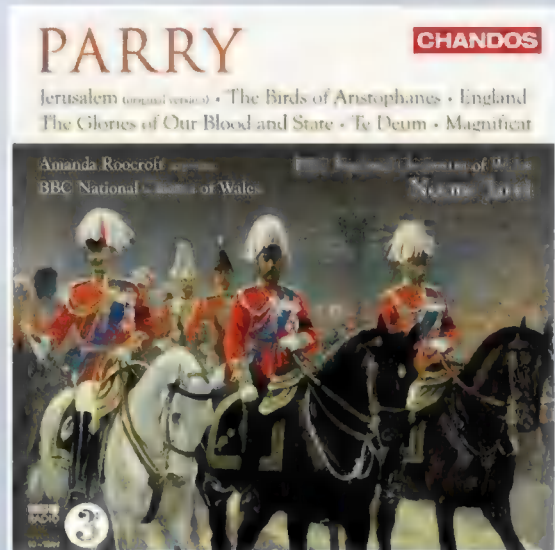
'Bringing the Last Night of the Proms to cinemas for the first time is a very exciting way of us reaching more people across the UK to celebrate the end of this extraordinary summer,' said BBC Proms director Roger Wright.

The concert, including performances from Nicola Benedetti in Bruch's First Violin Concerto and tenor Joseph Calleja, was also broadcast live on BBC Two and BBC One, and on BBC Radio 3. Audiences with access to a 3D television were able to view the Proms in 3D at home, too.

Marrying new technology with the world of classical music is also at the forefront of the Berlin Philharmonic's strategy. The orchestra has just signed a new agreement with the Sony Corporation designed to introduce the Philharmonic's online Digital Concert Hall to fresh audiences. Those customers purchasing internet-enabled televisions, Blu-ray disc players and audio systems through Sony will have direct access to the Digital Concert Hall, which has been pre-installed, ready to broadcast in impressive 4K2K high-definition thanks to new Sony CineAlta f65 cameras set up in the Berlin Philharmonie. Not only can viewers watch concerts live from the Philharmonie but they can also access the huge digital archive of past concerts featuring the orchestra.

For all the emphasis on the new, the relationship between Sony and the Berlin Philharmonic is long-established, dating back to Herbert von Karajan and Norio Ohga, who together unveiled the CD. 'By combining and developing our strengths,' the organisations 'aim to create entertainment experiences which move the hearts of people around the world,' said Masashi Imamura, president of Sony's Home Entertainment & Sound Business Group. 

FOREWORD BY HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES



# Disc of the Month

## Parry

### Orchestral and Choral Works

With a foreword by the long-standing Parry enthusiast HRH The Prince of Wales, this release features works spanning Parry's composing life, many never before recorded. The *Te Deum*, *Magnificat*, *England*, *The Glories of Our Blood and State*, and *The Birds of Aristophanes* feature alongside Parry's original orchestration of *Jerusalem*. Neeme Järvi conducts the BBC National Orchestra and Chorus of Wales, with the soprano Amanda Roocroft.

CHAN 10740

# CHANDOS New Releases

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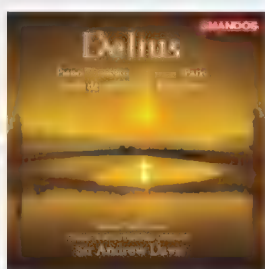


### Debussy

#### Collector's Edition

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet's vivid and personal interpretations of Debussy's complete works for piano are presented here in a five-volume Collector's Edition box set. The Gramophone Award-winning series includes the *Images* and *Préludes*, Books 1 and 2, the scores of the ballets *Khamma* and *Jeux* in versions for solo piano, and much more.

CHAN 10743(5)



### Delius

#### Orchestral Works

Two of Delius's greatest tone poems, *Brigg Fair* and *Paris*, are performed here by the Royal Scottish National Orchestra under Sir Andrew Davis. Also on the disc are the early *Idylle de printemps* and the rarely recorded three-movement 1897 version of the Piano Concerto, with Howard Shelley as soloist.

CHAN 10742



### Rózsa

#### Orchestral Works, Vol. 3

Though Miklós Rózsa is best known for his many cinematic scores, this series brings to light the colourful orchestral music written for the concert hall. The BBC Philharmonic and Rumon Gamba are joined by Jennifer Pike as soloist in the Violin Concerto. This disc also features *Theme*, *Variations and Finale*, and the Concerto for String Orchestra.

CHAN 10738



### British Works for Cello and Piano

This disc marks the start of a new series, in which the cellist Paul Watkins performs British works for cello and piano, accompanied by his brother, Huw Watkins. Volume 1 features the cello sonatas by Sir Charles Hubert H. Parry, John Foulds, and Frederick Delius, as well as Sir Granville Bantock's *Hamabdil*.

CHAN 10741



### British Clarinet Concertos

This month we also begin a survey of British clarinet concertos, with Michael Collins combining the roles of soloist and conductor. The first disc features the BBC Symphony Orchestra in works by Sir Charles Villiers Stanford, Gerald Finzi, and Sir Malcolm Arnold.

CHAN 10739

# TREASURES FROM ELOQUENCE



Decca 480 3303 (2CD)

## DIABELLI VARIATIONS – Beethoven, Moscheles, Mozart jnr, Schubert, Liszt Jörg Demus

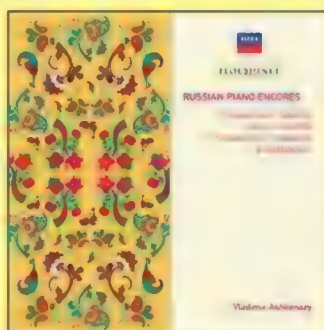
A unique record featuring variations by an array of composers on a waltz by Diabelli, plus Beethoven's Op. 120.



Decca 480 3605

## RACHMANINOV: Etudes-tableaux, Op. 33 & Op. 39 (1973 rec.) Vladimir Ashkenazy

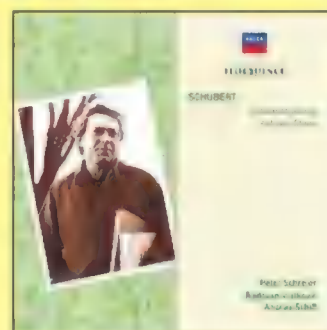
Critically-acclaimed Rachmaninov recordings, including Ashkenazy's rare 1973 recording of the Op. 39 *Etudes-Tableaux* released internationally on CD for the first time.



Decca 480 3607

## RUSSIAN PIANO ENCORES – Tchaikovsky, Taneyev, Liadov, Borodin, Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Rachmaninov Vladimir Ashkenazy

Rarities and surprises from Ashkenazy's vast catalogue with many of these items included as fillers on the original recordings.



Decca 480 4923

## SCHUBERT: Schwanengesang; Auf dem Strom Peter Schreier; Andrés Schiff; Radovan Vlatkovic

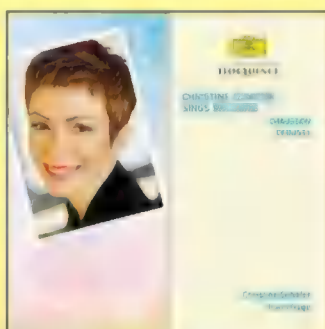
Schreier's deeply moving account of *Schwanengesang*, plus the previously unpublished recording of *Auf dem Strom* featuring Radovan Vlatkovic.



Decca 480 5368

## VERDI: Songs for Voice & Piano Margaret Price; Geoffrey Parsons

A rare Margaret Price recording of a selection of seldom-heard songs for voice and piano by Verdi.



Decca 480 5769

## Christine Schäfer sings French Mélodies – Chausson, Debussy

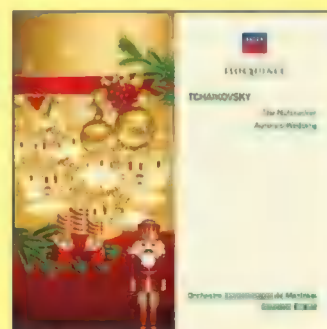
Christine Schäfer; Irwin Gage  
Sultry and seductive songs by Chausson and Debussy in critically-acclaimed performances by Christine Schäfer.



Decca 480 5369

## The Voice of Elena Souliotis Elena Souliotis

Compared with Callas for her dramatic intensity, this collection brings together a range of thrilling performances from Greek soprano Elena Souliotis.



Decca 480 6549 (2CD)

## TCHAIKOVSKY: The Nutcracker; Aurora's Wedding Charles Dutoit

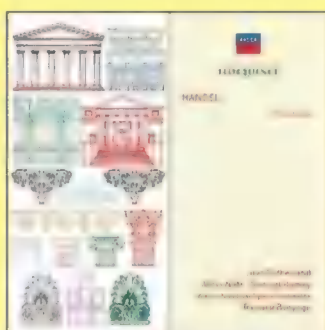
Dutoit's sumptuously recorded *Nutcracker* plus Diaghilev's own suite from *The Sleeping Beauty*, entitled *Aurora's Wedding*.



Decca 480 6553

## Once As I Remember...

John Eliot Gardiner  
John Eliot Gardiner's recreation of the 'Springhead Christmas Play' returns to the catalogue.



Decca 480 6105 (2CD)

## HANDEL: Rodelinda

Joan Sutherland; Richard Bonyngue  
Long out of the catalogue, this rare Sutherland/Bonyngue collaboration appears on CD once more.



Decca 480 6666

## HAYDN: Cello Concertos Nos. 1 & 2 Jian Wang

Jian Wang's first recording for Deutsche Grammophon – poetic accounts of the Haydn Concertos return to the CD catalogue



Decca 480 2296

## BRITTEN RARITIES

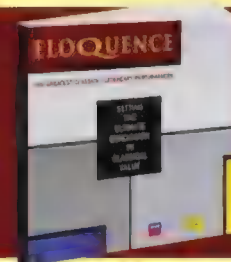
John Harbessy; Pamela Bowden  
*Friday Afternoons, A Charm of Lullabies; The Sword and the Stone, Abraham and Isaac, Voices for Today...* rare recordings exhumed from the Decca archives.

## COMING SOON The Decca legacy of ISTVÁN KERTÉSZ

Brahms Symphonies - Kodály Orchestral & Choral works; Hary János - Dvořák Tone Poems, Overtures, Wind Serenade, Symphony No. 9 (VPO)



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# Steven Isserlis

The British cellist on two major projects in Salzburg and the often-tortuous process of editing one's own recordings

I am writing these immortal words on a plane to Salzburg, where the festival is in full swing. Once there, I shall be taking part in two unrelated 'projects'. (When did that word become so prevalent in the music world? I'm not sure I like it – but there's no escaping it.) One is the fourth mini-series that I've programmed at the festival over the years. I am being joined by my long-standing musical partners (and close friends) Joshua Bell and Dénes Várjon, as well as by some newer friends, in programmes that showcase the greatness of Czech chamber music – works by Suk, Janáček, Martinů, Smetana and, of course, Dvořák. Why is all this music so irresistibly lovable? Perhaps it is because of a particular quality that all these composers share – a childlike innocence, which shines through no matter what the nature of the emotions being expressed. Those emotions differ hugely, from the wide-eyed freshness of Suk's early Piano Quartet to the profound tragedy of Smetana's Piano Trio. And then there's Dvořák: his piano quartet in Eb and the famous Second Piano Quintet are simply irreplaceable. What a wonderful soul he must have had! Somehow I have the feeling that now, in heaven, he is sitting next to Haydn, having a glorious time. Both men were as capable as any of writing bleak, tragic works – and yet, when one thinks of their overall output, it's surely joy that is the overriding characteristic. Their music makes one glad to be alive.

**The other 'project'** (yuk) in which I am involved in Salzburg is one celebrating the centenary of the great Hungarian violinist and conductor Sándor Végh. If late 19th/early 20th-century Czech composers hold a special place in my musical heart, it has been living Hungarian musicians who have influenced my whole approach to music. I have been lucky enough to work with great musicians such as György Kurtág, Ferenc Rados, Lorand Fenyves, András Schiff, and others; from all of them I have learnt so much that has been invaluable. My first contact with a legendary Hungarian, however, was with the towering figure of Végh –

*'Regarding Haydn and Dvořák's overall output, joy is the overriding characteristic'*

unique violinist, incomparable conductor and (often) terrifying man. My personal relationship with him was a tad complicated – but he was a huge musical influence on me, as on so many others. His centenary is being celebrated at Salzburg (where he lived and worked for the last years of his life) with concerts, and with masterclasses involving musicians from IMS Prussia Cove, an institution founded by Végh (I succeeded him there as artistic director). András Schiff, who performed and recorded extensively with the great man, is taking an important part in these events; one can hear Végh's musical values shining through András's playing.



salzburg: the beautiful city where my two 'projects' are taking place as part of the renowned Salzburg Festival



In the company of friends, old and new: at salzburg's Mozarteum with Dénes Várjon (piano), Lawrence Power and Alina Pogostkina

Among all these activities, I have the rather more onerous task of listening to second edits of recordings to be released imminently. If all goes as planned, between December 2011 and January 2013 I will have recorded six-and-a-bit CDs – more than ever before in such a short period. I don't know quite how this has happened – and I apologise to readers of *Gramophone* if they get bored with seeing my name. Actually, provided that the session goes well, I love recording; but I hate listening to the edits. I go through them obsessively, asking questions about almost every phrase. But when I've done it, I feel liberated; I've sent my child out into the world, and there's nothing more I can do. With the first of these recordings, a recital with Thomas Adès, I felt the weight of responsibility even more heavily than usual. The CD contains first recordings of works written for me by Adès and by Kurtág; they are both, in their very different ways, masterpieces, and it is my job to convey that clearly. But at least I had the composers' advice to hand. For the Adès, Thomas was at the piano; and for the Kurtág, I emailed the composer a version I recorded on the first day of sessions, and then called him up for comments before re-recording it. It's going to be tricky doing that when I record the Beethoven sonatas...

■ To read *Gramophone's* review of Steven Isserlis's new disc, turn to page 58



## SESSION REPORT Mendelssohn: Violin Concertos

Work Mendelssohn: Violin Concertos in E minor and D minor; Hebrides Overture

Artists Alina Ibragimova (vn), OAE / Vladimir Jurowski Venue Henry Wood Hall, London

Producer Andrew Keener Engineer Simon Eadon (Abbey Records)

Dates of session September 2-4, 2011 Words Francesco Burns

It may be a typical London rush hour but inside Henry Wood Hall it's an oasis of calm. Which is just as well – recording the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto, one of the pinnacles of the repertoire, requires extreme focus and determination, which Alina Ibragimova has in abundance. She's recording the work with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment under Vladimir Jurowski, which adds an unusual 'period' sensibility to a concerto that is so often recorded.

Both soloist and band are playing on gut strings, and listeners with a particular sensitivity to pitch will also notice that they are playing at 437Hz rather than the standard 440. However, as producer Andrew Keener tells me, 'The sound differs less than it used to. We've come through the necessary subversiveness of the great trailblazers like Hogwood and Norrington to arrive at something that is more balanced now.'

The recording was in talks for almost two years prior to these sessions and originally had the late Sir Charles Mackerras (who had previously recorded the E minor Concerto with Monica Huggett and the OAE) on the bill. Ibragimova is delighted that the project has finally come to fruition. 'There are so many amazing emotions that only Mendelssohn gets,' she says. 'He's so good at writing genuinely happy music.' It was, in fact, her suggestion to record the work in this way, on gut strings and with this orchestra, and she certainly has the necessary experience and understanding of the stylistic contrasts involved, mostly through her work with her ensemble Chiaroscuro.

What, then, does this particular aesthetic offer? 'The sound is very different; the opening of the second movement, for example – you will have never heard it like this!' She insists that, contrary to popular perception, gut strings do project, 'just in a different way'. Jurowski confirms this and goes further: 'The sound is less muscular but *fortissimo* remains *fortissimo* on gut strings...It allows more of a chamber music approach.' This is indeed clear from both artists throughout the sessions and at no point is there a sense that the conductor is merely accompanying the soloist: 'I don't believe in accompaniment, never,' insists Jurowski. 'I believe in collaboration. That's my principle. Music only lives, breathes and thrives if there is a marriage between the orchestra and the soloist.'

As a companion to the E minor Concerto, the much earlier D minor Concerto is also being recorded. Which of the two, I ask Jurowski, poses the greater challenge? 'With the E minor it is the burden of its fame, and everything is extremely fragile and exposed...

*'Music only lives, breathes and thrives if there is a marriage between orchestra and soloist'*

– Vladimir Jurowski



3

- 1 Gut-strung instruments are used for this recording of Mendelssohn's two violin concertos and The Hebrides overture  
 2 Violinist Alina Ibragimova during the sessions  
 3 Conductor Vladimir Jurowski discusses a point in the score with producer Andrew Keener  
 4 'Mendelssohn is so good at writing genuinely happy music' – and his joyful Concerto puts a smile on the face of the recording's soloist



4

The D minor is a work of a 12-year-old genius and the writing is at times very awkward.' Ibragimova adds: 'With a work less well known, you make more personal decisions. It's not always as eloquently written as the E minor and, in a way, that's part of its charm.'

Most of my time at these sessions is spent sitting next to Keener and engineer Simon Eadon. With 30 years of experience in the business, Eadon is an intensely musical man and, as well as providing a spare pair of ears for musical decisions, he uses his technical knowledge of the equipment to set up the warmest, most balanced sound possible. It is fascinating to witness, too, the sensitivity of Keener's ear, picking up the slightest of intonation fumbles buried within an orchestral *tutti* and marking down on the score multiple areas that require revisiting, all in real time. As the sessions progress, it becomes clear that it is the interaction with the artists that is Keener's real skill. His ability to coax, gently cajole and encourage them is a masterclass in the art of diplomacy. As he rightly says, 'Not only are all musicians different, they are different as people. The producer that overlooks the latter does so at his or her peril.' One of the ways to engender the trust of an artist, he tells me, is to avoid being sycophantic; artists need to trust that their producer is being thorough and critical. This total involvement, and the collaborative effort between artists and producer, becomes clear from the first day. As Keener explains, 'With studio recording being every bit as separate a discipline from the live event as cinema is to theatre, the role of the producer has, for better or worse, morphed from the scribe of early times to present-day collaborator.'

Listening to playbacks in the control room, the result is absolutely refreshing. The sound is rich and warm, and details within the score – many of which would never have occurred to me previously – suddenly appear illuminated. With the three days of recording now over, the next stage begins: editing together the different takes to form the most accurate and, more importantly, most musically interesting performance which becomes the final product. From what I've heard, it can't come soon enough. 6

► To read Gramophone's review, turn to page 72

## Johann Sebastian Bach The Well-Tempered Clavier

András Schiff



'To me, Bach's music is not black and white.  
It's full of colours.' – András Schiff



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Photo: Nadia F. Romanini

# Michael Gielen

A belief in fulfilling and extending tradition as well as validating the concerns of today has animated Michael Gielen's career, both as conductor and composer, writes **Peter Quantrill**

**M**ichael Gielen was born in Dresden in 1927. His father was a famous stage director and his mother a soprano, an early and acclaimed exponent of Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*. It was the kind of household where Rose played the piano while Joseph sang Schubert Lieder. They emigrated to Buenos Aires in 1940, a move that may have been forced on them by Rose's Jewish heritage, but it brought Michael to a transplanted Berlin, at the centre of which was the Teatro Colón. He cut his teeth there as a répétiteur, working with the music director Erich Kleiber and a procession of great singers and conductors of the day (whom he'd encounter again once the war was over and he'd settled in Vienna in 1950). There he made his first recordings, including two Bach cantatas (Nos 122 and 133) distinguished by lovely, spry articulation and consistently explored textual sensitivity, exemplifying the marriage of old skills and new ideas during the post-war Bach revival. He returned to Europe, bringing with him a lifelong love of South American literature which has surfaced in his own music, notably *Ein Tag tritt hervor* – the delicious, Boulezian settings of Neruda.

Behind everything Gielen has done is a belief in the importance of a mission to fulfil and extend tradition, and to make valid and interesting the things of today. Opera house posts in Vienna, Stockholm and Amsterdam cultivated in him the expertise and confidence that made his tenure as music director and impresario of the Frankfurt Opera a defining decade (1977–87), surpassing the work of Klemperer and Gustaf Gründgens at the Kroll Opera in 1930s Berlin. In close collaboration with Ruth Berghaus and others, Gielen put on radical productions of Berlioz, Verdi and Wagner, of which frustratingly little is available save as photographs and a few dusty YouTube clips.

Gielen could then have embarked on lucrative guest appearances, but he believed it more important to involve himself in the life of a radio orchestra with a function to fulfil that did not depend on a procession of ritzy conductors for its sense of prestige. A brief stint as principal guest conductor of the BBCSO had come to an end in 1981 with a Proms *Gurrelieder* of wondrous delicacy. He may have been under-used and under-appreciated in the central German repertoire at the BBC, but two extensive series of recordings, first on Intercord (currently unavailable) and then Hänssler, revealed the value of hearing this music through the ears of a man to whom nothing is foreign except specialism. His watchword is 'clarity': 'The top line must never be a dictator, but rather *primus inter pares*'. These recordings were made with the generously funded German radio orchestras, and in particular the SWR Baden-Baden and Freiburg. Freedom of rehearsal matters to the great conductors of new music: time not just to coach professionals into getting their heads around the notes, but for all on stage to believe in their merits. Apart from Hans Zender, he may be the last member of a central-European conducting tradition (with Scherchen, Rosbaud, Bour and Leibowitz at its head) that grew from the 'obligation and inclination'

(*Pflicht und Neigung*, a typical Gielen piece for its deft, intimately heard sonorities) to perform and record the canon of Western music with unfailing care and respect for the score in conditions of sometimes hard-won sympathy.

While Gielen has brought professional flair to the determined banalities of Orff's *Entrada* and Shostakovich's Twelfth Symphony, accompanied Russian Romantic concertos with the hungry audacity of youth, and latterly turned to learn and become a determined advocate of the completed Mahler Tenth and original Bruckner Eighth, I associate him most with Bernd Alois Zimmermann, whose grandest works he premiered after endless dedicated rehearsals. Zimmermann's music is animated by a concept of 'spherical time', which brings together the music of many ages and styles not in some Scriabinesque frenzy but a furious parade: celebration or indictment of the state we're in? A Gielen performance always says 'yes'.

My Spotify playlist runs to 48 hours of recordings from the Bach mentioned earlier, and a wonderfully warm and spirited Gluck *Orfeo*, through forceful and lucid cycles of Beethoven, Brahms and Mahler, important recordings of the perennially new figures of the avant-garde such as Feldman, Nono and Lachenmann, to persuasive sound-portraits of York Höller and Michaël Levinas. There are no duds; they all approach the heart of the music through the meaning of the composed notes, not through anecdote. As David Gutman wrote in praise of Gielen's Mahler Seventh, he is 'surely the most underrated conductor of our time'. **G**

## THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING



'Gielen Edition'  
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## DEFINING MOMENTS

• **1965** – *Premiere of Zimmermann's Die Soldaten at the Cologne Opera*

'I was half dead: the audience had quite a shock, and the triumph of the piece was accompanied by many polite boos' (Gielen).

• **1980** – *Aida (for Frankfurt Opera)*

The opening of *Aida* at the Frankfurt Opera directed by Hans Neuenfels is 'recognised today as one of the high points of contemporary operatic dramaturgy' (David J Levin, *Opera Through Other Eyes*). According to Gielen: 'We don't find it very easy to get people...to rehearse for seven weeks. But voice is not everything. The Amneris in our second cast flatly refused to cooperate. So I had to throw her out. But we still had to pay her.'

• **2005** – *Unbedingt Musik*

Gielen's memoirs (Insel Verlag, HB, 366pp, £13.59)

*'A Gielen performance  
always says "yes"'*



PHOTOGRAPHY: CLIVE BARD/AREMAL

# Revisiting a modern classic

Hannah Nepil talks to *James MacMillan* about his concerto *Veni, veni, Emmanuel*

James MacMillan and I seat ourselves around the conference table. Outside our meeting room, the office of music publishers Boosey & Hawkes hums with a businesslike efficiency. On reflection, it might seem an odd setting for an involved discussion on religion and spirituality. But that's exactly where the Scottish composer and I begin.

With good reason: these topics are important to MacMillan, whose compositions are often informed by his strong Christian faith. And they are relevant to his exuberant percussion concerto *Veni, veni, Emmanuel*, a recording of which has just been released on Challenge Classics in a performance featuring Colin Currie, conducted by MacMillan himself.

Written for the percussionist Evelyn Glennie, who premiered it at the Proms in 1992, *Veni, veni, Emmanuel* is one of MacMillan's most frequently performed works. Yet it still makes an unusual statement. On the one hand, its musical material is derived from a 15th-century French Advent hymn, in reference, as MacMillan puts it, to 'the coming of the incarnation'. On the other, its lack of sung text obscures the theological dimension, and its joyous percussion part can work on a purely abstract level. 'You can't imagine this being done in anything other than a concert hall. You wouldn't hear it as part of a church service.'

Nevertheless, MacMillan's religious values govern many of the work's characteristics, not least its sheer physicality. 'As a Christian, the body is

*'Looking at the Veni, veni, Emmanuel score is like reading old letters you wrote when you were younger' — James MacMillan*

important,' says MacMillan. 'For me, spirituality is about the here and now. Why else would God want to become human?'

As he speaks, he points to a tiny rhythmic fragment in the score comprising two beats of unequal length. Representing a heartbeat, it is one way in which MacMillan has chosen to allude to 'the human presence of Christ'. It also serves a structural function, providing unity in a piece that could, according to MacMillan, be potentially chaotic, due to the sprawling nature of the percussion part. 'The percussion kitchen is vast,' he says. 'You could almost throw in the kitchen sink.'

The score itself has remained more or less unchanged since it was penned 20 years ago. MacMillan does admit, however, that looking at it



MacMillan: he may be regarded 'a dour Scot' but in *Veni, veni*, there's 'a real joy'

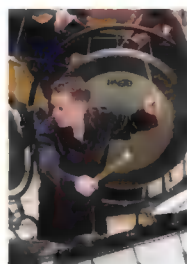
now feels a little 'like reading old letters that you wrote when you were younger. My music hasn't changed drastically since but it has evolved.' In what way? 'Some people say it has got easier [to perform]. When I wrote this piece I didn't conduct very much. Now that I conduct a lot I've learnt a more practical approach to the orchestra.'

What his music is, however, he finds difficult to define, drawing my attention to the other two works on the new disc. *A Deep but Dazzling Darkness*, a crackly piece for solo violin, ensemble and tape, is worlds away from *Veni, veni, Emmanuel*. The same goes for *Í (A Meditation on Iona)*, a sombre work that reflects the atmosphere of the Hebridean island. 'Some have said that *Veni, veni, Emmanuel* sounds as if it is by a different person,' says MacMillan. 'That might make some composers feel uneasy because they think, "What's the real me?"'

And what is? 'I think it's all me,' he laughs. 'Some people think that I'm very dour, because I'm a Scot you see. You might say there is a "miserablist" tendency – not just in the Scottish people but in the literature, and sometimes in the music. That might be in *A Deep but Dazzling Darkness* but not at all in *Veni, veni, Emmanuel*, where there's a real joy in the music.' Of course, as MacMillan reminds me, such differences come down to a range of factors, not least the kinds of things he was reading, responding to and thinking about during the compositional process: *Veni, veni, Emmanuel* is the product of a specific time and place.

And what was that place? 'I was quite happy, I suppose,' he says. **G**

► To read Gramophone's review, turn to page 70



## The historical view

*Colin Currie*

2012

'Technically this is a hard piece. It gets quite fast, you have to negotiate your way around many drums and it needs to sound cohesive. I first played it in 1996 and every single time I come back I never fail to get caught up in it: it's a very emotional, exhilarating work.'

*Evelyn Glennie*

1994

'With James MacMillan's *Veni, veni, Emmanuel*, every time we play it we're always thinking of new ideas. For example, I may say to James, "Oh, why don't we try a different instrument?" and he'll be quite open about it. If he feels confident that it may work, then we'll give it a go.'

*Max Loppert*

*Financial Times*, 1992 (review of premiere)

'An expertly engineered piece of soloist-versus-orchestra showmanship... *Veni, veni, Emmanuel* arrests attention from the first downbeat. MacMillan's harmonic signalling and underpinning are lucid. His gestures are graphic in vividness, focused in purpose, powerful yet economical in musculature.'

## QUIZ



Among the composers who have written for me is Darius Milhaud

## Who am I?

Pit your wits against Gramophone

I'm probably best known for my spooky wail. But there's more to me than that, both in terms of my sonic capabilities and methods of control.

My origins lie in the First World War and I evolved through different designs over the decades.

I stopped being produced in 1988 but several conservatoires still teach me.

At times I sound like a flute; at others I honk like a bassoon. My armoury includes sine waves, triangle waves, square waves and pulse waves. And I've been known to produce pink noise.

My creator was a cellist and his ambition was to give me

an equivalent degree of musical expressivity.

Although I've featured in popular films from *Amélie* to *Lawrence of Arabia*, and songs by Radiohead, among others, my sound has also caught the imagination of composers such as Darius Milhaud and Tristan Murail.



I featured in *Lawrence of Arabia*

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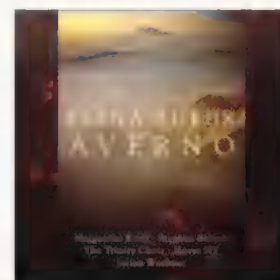


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# NOTES & LETTERS

George Lloyd deserves a CD • Lalandi's 1963 Bach Festival • Discovering Sánchez's Iberia

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## Let's seed a Floating Cloud

In 1995 I persuaded the great English composer George Lloyd to come to Uxbridge to present a programme of his own music to our Recorded Music Society. He was a friendly and charming man, and an audience of about 50 took to him immediately.

One of the items he played was from a cassette he had recorded himself during a concert in Hong Kong. It seems that his inspiration for composing this orchestral phantasy, entitled *Floating Cloud*, came from an earlier meeting held in a top room of a very tall skyscraper building, also in Hong Kong. When he entered the room he was met by a dense cloud of tobacco smoke that equalled the clouds seen through the windows, which gave him a strange sensation of dizziness. He just had to portray his feelings in musical terms.

Our audience enjoyed his cassette enormously. Our President at the time, my great friend Frederick Youens, enthused with the rest of us, saying he would love to have a recording of the work. Fred, of course, was one of the four gentlemen who founded the National Federation of Gramophone Societies in 1936. Sadly he and George Lloyd failed to survive beyond 1998.

I have been in touch with William Lloyd, the composer's nephew, who has confirmed that a commercial recording still hasn't been issued of the work *Floating Cloud*. My memory tells me that this work must not be allowed to disappear, hence my plea to anyone with influence within the recording industry to ensure that it reaches CD. Perhaps it could be coupled with works guaranteed to be a commercial success, thus bringing it to the attention of many more ears. The Lloyd family have the orchestral parts and the cassette for guidance, and I am sure they would appreciate any help to preserve this work for music lovers yet to come.

I live in the hope that a CD comes soon as I have now reached 80 and fear that, like Fred, I may never hear *Floating Cloud* ever again. Surely not?

Murray Nash

Chairman, Uxbridge Recorded Music Society

## Lalandi graced Bach Festival

The obituary of Lina Lalandi (September, page 25) brought back happy memories of the first English Bach Festival, held

## Letter of the Month



Glenn Gould in the studio: when the stool couldn't be adjusted, his footwear could

## Ups and downs of a Glenn Gould concert

I was privileged to hear Glenn Gould play with the Cleveland Orchestra and George Szell in March 1957, when they performed Beethoven's Second Piano Concerto.

(Gould's four remaining appearances with the orchestra, however, were led by Louis Lane, the associate conductor.) Although sitting in the very last row of Severance Hall, I could hear his humming clearly.

In a rehearsal, Gould repeatedly adjusted the height of the piano stool

he insisted on using. After several unsuccessful on-again-off-again attempts, Szell brought Gould's efforts to an end with a suggestion: 'Perhaps, Mr Gould, a few inches off the derrière would resolve the problem.'

Szell, none the less, had a high regard for Gould. 'No doubt about it,' he commented, 'that nut's a genius.'

Thomas Jemielity

South Bend, IN, US

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Please send letters responding to articles in this issue for consideration for publication in the November issue by October 5. Gramophone reserves the right to edit all letters for publication.

**PRESTO**  
CLASSICAL

in Oxford in 1963. I went to a concert on the opening night in the Sheldonian Theatre, where the Philharmonia Orchestra was conducted by Jascha Horenstein. The concert included two cantatas and a harpsichord concerto played by Lina Lalandi. She was a beautiful and elegant lady, and that evening was one of my most memorable musical occasions.

Later that week (and the night before some exams) I then heard Ralph Kirkpatrick give a superb performance of the *Goldberg Variations*. And at the following year's festival, I had the amazing experience of hearing Stravinsky conduct his *Symphony of Psalms*.

In later years, the festival predominantly took place in London rather than Oxford.

David Waldman  
Cambridge, UK

## Dead reckoning

A few days ago, I ordered Simon Rattle's recording of the 'complete' Bruckner Ninth. It arrived this morning. The booklet says that it is a live recording from the Philharmonie, Berlin, recorded in concert (how much better it is to read it described thus, rather than as a 'live' recording – the reverse, perhaps, of Ravel's joke about a 'dead pavane for an Infanta') on 7-9.11.2012. What a privilege it will be to be there – but how do I occupy my time in the interim? Communing with the spirit world, perhaps?

John Haden  
Worcester, UK

## Breadth also required?

Michael Johnson (October, page 26) claims that Martha Argerich is one of the four outstanding women pianists of the 20th century. Yet elsewhere in the same issue (page 79) David Threasher indirectly touches upon her major defect: her lack of range. It is all very well recording Ravel's beautiful but essentially lightweight G major Concerto



Nathan Milstein with Lina Lalandi in London in 1963, the same year she helped launch the English Bach Festival

11 times but where are any of the Mozart concertos from Argerich, let alone the last two by Beethoven? Given her dexterity, power and lyricism, her Brahms concertos could have been staggering. Moreover, when has she ever much performed – let alone recorded – the solo piano music of Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, Schumann, Liszt or Brahms? How one would have loved a complete Beethoven sonata cycle from her. But clearly such music is not to her taste. It is all very well claiming that she is a great pianist but surely great pianism is not just a matter of mechanical excellence or even depth of insight into just a relatively few works. It is also a matter of combining vision with breadth of taste.

Eric Shanes  
London W3, UK

## Bloodline: Albéniz to Sánchez

Thank you all, and especially Bryce Morrison, for the superb article on *Iberia* (Collection, June, page 96). The description of Esteban Sánchez's performance was too fascinating not to follow up, so I ordered a set which arrived three days ago.

Since then, aside from revisiting Alicia de Larrocha's (1986) and Hamelin's sets – the only two I had in my collection – once each to reconnoitre the territory, I've been unable to play anything else. Totally hooked! Mr Morrison's highlighting of the elementalism of *The Rite of Spring* in Sánchez's interpretation is partly what drew me to wanting to hear it and it's a completely apt allusion. I'm finding this listening experience as thrilling and life-enhancing as when I first discovered

*The Rite*, which converted me to classical music when I was 14!

The set includes many of Albéniz's other piano works and it's reassuring to hear the same exceptional originality being brought to the slightest and most hackneyed of them as well, proof that Sánchez's *Iberia* was no 'darkly radiant' flash in the pan. I get the impression that anything he played must have been gold. He must have given all he had – certainly his Albéniz is astonishingly unrestrained and generous, emotionally as well as technically. Yet there's nothing eccentric or overwrought about his imagining. It's all completely appropriate. What's radical is that he's gone perhaps further beneath the skin than anyone else, often painfully so, to expose the blood, his own, pumping through Albéniz's amazing work. Spain and blood cannot be separated.

There are Sánchez discs of Fauré and Turina I must track down. How sad that he didn't record more. Right now I'm not sure whether I'll ever bother playing Hamelin's *Iberia* again, and eventually I must hear the Pérez, Orozco and Larrocha 1962 cycles, again based on Mr Morrison's recommendations – but I reckon it'll be a while before I put Sánchez's to one side.

Graham Barr  
Tasmania

## Editorial note

In the October issue we listed a set of the Requiem and organ works by Maurice Duruflé as being issued by Dacapo. It is, however, a recording by another Danish label, Danacord.



Futuristic Rattle: conducting Bruckner Nine in Berlin

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# OBITUARIES

An organist who, beneath the showmanship, possessed style, integrity and peerless technique

## CARLO CURLEY

*Organist*

*Born August 24, 1952,*

*Died August 11, 2012*

Carlo Curley, who has died all too young at 59, was a brilliant organist with an outsize personality and a physical frame to match. The *San José Mercury News* dubbed him 'The Pavarotti of the Organ', a sobriquet he embraced enthusiastically. Not for him the dry pedantry of the organ scholar, shut away in some dusty organ loft far from public view. If the organ was situated out of sight, whenever possible he would insist on a screen and camera so that, as he liked to say, 'the audience can see me flying'. If a venue did not have an instrument, then he would bring his Allen digital touring organ with him. Curley was on a mission to bring the organ (church or concert hall) into the open and to deprive it of any of its stodgy, sacred associations. And he enjoyed talking to his audiences almost as much as he did playing for them.

The showman side of him could sometimes lapse into vulgarity (he was quite shameless about flogging his CDs post-concert but would charm his customers with flights of irreverent humour in the process). He would invariably round off any extrovert piece, be it by Bach, Boëllmann or Sousa, with a delighted cry of 'Woooo!' His audiences laughed, applauded and

shouted for more. This aspect, naturally, made the musical establishment wary of him and his exuberant stage manner tempted many to push him into the Liberace class of performer. That was completely mistaken. Curley had a peerless technique allied with an extraordinary colouristic imagination and a wide-ranging repertoire. If he knew how to 'sell' the organ's music, he was also a musician of enormous integrity and an astute, meticulous stylist.

He was born in Monroe, North Carolina. There was music in the family: his grandmother was a professor of piano in Massachusetts, his mother an orchestral violinist. By the age of 15 he was organist of the Baptist church in Atlanta, Georgia; by 18 he was director of music at Girard College, Philadelphia. Among his teachers were Virgil Fox, from whom Curley not only inherited a desire not to go unnoticed but also his staggering agility at the console, and Sir George Thalben-Ball, the doyen of British organists, who bequeathed much of his huge music library to Curley.

His best recordings were made for Argo and Decca including, in 1993, the first-ever commercially available video of a classical organ performance ('Organ Imperial' at St Mary Redcliffe, Bristol). His autobiography, *In the Pipeline*, was published by HarperCollins in 1998 (this writer's copy is inscribed from 'Carlo, The Simple Village Organist').

After living a peripatetic life in America, Sweden and London, he finally settled in Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, where he died. He was unmarried, a lively adornment to the sometimes over-solemn world of classical music, and will be much missed.

Jeremy Nicholas

## An appreciation

The American virtuoso organist Carlo Curley has died at the premature age of 59.

I produced a number of recordings with him in the late 1970s and '80s, and he told me that he had been greatly influenced by the American organist Virgil Fox and the famous George Thalben-Ball of the Temple Church, London.

His was an amazing talent, whether on the Allen Computer Organ in Alexandra Palace or various organs around this country and on the continent. I was present at a recital he gave at St Paul's Cathedral. Staggering!

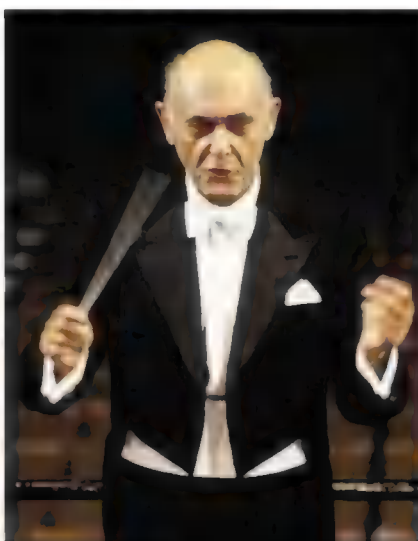
He will be greatly missed: I say this as creator and producer of the EMI Great Cathedral Organ Series and many other organ recordings. I am trying to get some of his recordings reissued.

Brian Culverhouse  
Cobham, Surrey, UK



The irrepressible Carlo Curley loved his audiences as much as his music – and they loved him

## NEXT MONTH NOVEMBER 2012



### Solti centenary

Mike Ashman marks the 100th anniversary of Solti's birth by exploring elements of the legendary conductor's life and legacy through the prism of his many recordings

### Lang Lang plays Chopin

As the chart-topping pianist releases his latest recording, he talks to Emma Baker about his performing ambitions, his role as educational ambassador and his achievements on and off the stage

### The Gramophone Collection

Philip Clark delves into the recordings of Ives's transformational work, the Concord Sonata, and recommends the version that every collector should own

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## GRAMOPHONE CLASSICAL MUSIC AWARDS 2012

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# THE WINNERS

Every year the *Gramophone* Awards celebrate the best classical music recordings and, as the following list of winners reveals, this has been a truly exceptional year

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30 Artist of the Year

32 Lifetime Achievement

34 The Piano Award

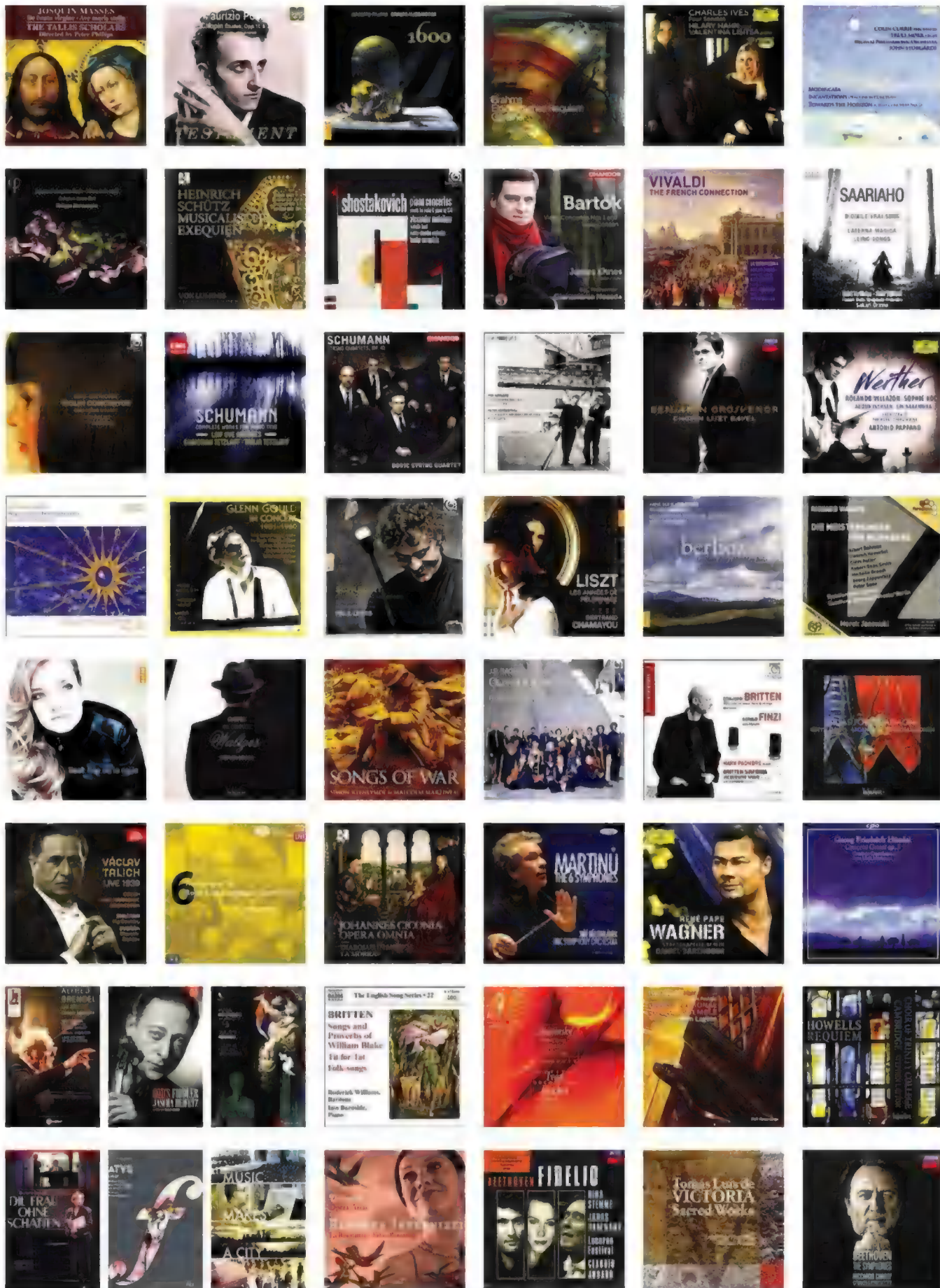
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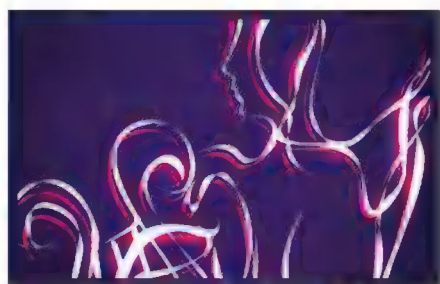
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## GRAMOPHONE CLASSICAL MUSIC AWARDS 2012

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# CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE

As we unveil the *Gramophone* Awards 2012, editor-in-chief **James Jolly** explains how the rigorous judging process selected the winners from a particularly rich year of recordings

**T**he 2012 *Gramophone* Classical Music Awards, given this year in association with EFG International and Steinway & Sons, are the culmination not just of a long and rigorous voting process but also of a particularly rich year of classical recordings. The range of music on offer this year is quite astounding – alongside such ‘core’ repertoire works as the Beethoven symphonies are the choral works of Tomás Luis de Victoria and the four violin sonatas by Charles Ives.

The *Gramophone* Awards were launched in 1977 and over the course of the following 35 years have become one of the most respected and influential arbiters of recorded musical quality. Many outstanding recordings – Nigel Kennedy’s Elgar Violin Concerto, Herbert von Karajan’s Mahler Ninth, Claudio Abbado’s Schubert symphonies and the Zehetmair Quartet’s Schumann among them – have been acknowledged and have since assumed the status of classics. And among this year’s batch, there are certainly a couple that are likely to become benchmark versions.

The basic voting process remained largely unchanged this year but there was one significant innovation: rather than invite the

record companies to nominate a proportion of their annual releases to form the initial list, we took on that task ourselves. From a longlist of all the recordings reviewed over the course of a year (June 1, 2011 to May 31, 2012) we came up with a list of about 750 recordings based on their *Gramophone* reviews; interestingly, this was almost exactly the same number as would be nominated under the ‘old method’.

This longlist, divided into specific genres, was then circulated to committees of specialist critics – in other words, opera and recital to our vocal/opera critics, piano recordings to our keyboard specialists and so on. They then whittled these longer lists down to six per category: this formed Round 1. At this point any critic from the panel could opt into as many categories as he or she wanted. All the contending discs were dispatched with about two and a half months of listening time allowed before votes were called in at the end of July. These votes produced the winners in each category. Having listened to each of the winning discs, a group of critics met at *Gramophone*’s offices and, after a morning of debate, the Recording of the Year emerged.

We hope you enjoy exploring the recordings as much as we have and that many of them will become treasured parts of your collection. ©

### Download Award tracks on iTunes

To mark this year’s *Gramophone* Classical Music Awards, readers can download selected tracks by Award-winners for free on iTunes. You can enjoy this offer whether you listen to your music on your computer, iPad or iPhone. You’ll also find a selection of recordings by **Claudio Abbado**, winner of the Lifetime Achievement Award, as chosen by *Gramophone*. In addition, there are podcasts and much more that followers of these Awards will want to explore. The offer is available until November 30.

If you already have an iTunes account, type **iTunes.com/gramawards** into your browser, then click on the free playlist. If new to iTunes, visit **iTunes.com/uk** and click on the blue ‘Download Now’ button to install. Now type **iTunes.com/gramawards** into your browser and iTunes will open.





## ARTIST OF THE YEAR

Every bit as sensational in the recording studio as he is in the opera house, Joseph Calleja has enjoyed a very special year, as *Gramophone* readers have acknowledged by voting him winner of this Award

### Winner

*Joseph Calleja, tenor*

Although still only 34, Joseph Calleja has most definitely arrived – a tenor of uncommon distinction, whose elegance and sense of style are second to none on the operatic stage today. It seems fitting that he should win the Artist of the Year Award now, following a high-profile 2011-12 season, which started with the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize concert in Stockholm and has been crowned by the once-in-a-lifetime invitation to sing 'Rule, Britannia!' at the Last Night of the Proms.

It could not have happened to a more deserving singer. Voters for the *Gramophone* Award might pat themselves on the back for having chosen an artist who has striven to uphold the noblest traditions of singing handed down the generations. Calleja's teacher, the Maltese tenor Paul Asciak, has told how the technique he was passing on stretched back in a direct line to singers such as Aureliano Pertile and Dino Borgioli. 'Much of our time was spent listening to the recordings of the great tenors of the past,' he said, 'such as Anselmi, Bonci, Schipa, early Gigli and Tagliavini, with all their distinctive techniques and *legato* school of singing.'

How well the student learnt his lessons could be heard from Calleja's first recital disc ('Tenor Arias', 5/04). Released in 2004, just as the singer's career was reaching an international level, it announced a new, young tenor of very individual character: the flexibility of the voice and the old-style grace and beauty brought the music of Donizetti and early Verdi to life like the finest porcelain, restored till it gleams afresh. No wonder Chailly proclaimed: 'For some time I have not heard such a talent at this young age, with a sound harking back to a quality I thought we had long lost.'

Since then Calleja has more than fulfilled his early promise. With 28 roles under his belt, he has expanded his repertoire to include Gounod's Faust and Roméo, Puccini's Rodolfo and Pinkerton,

and more Verdi operas, with *Un ballo in maschera* the next to come. There have been complete opera recordings of Bellini and Donizetti and further recital discs, including this year's 'Be My Love', a tribute to Mario Lanza. He has also been appointed Malta's first Cultural Ambassador.

If there is one image that stays in the mind from Calleja's career to date, it is probably seeing him opposite Plácido Domingo in *Simon Boccanegra* at the Royal Opera House in 2010. In vocal terms the two tenors are very different – Calleja's voice the finely tuned clarinet alongside Domingo's bronzed trombone – but, with Calleja in Domingo's old role of Gabriele Adorno, there was a palpable sense of occasion as the senior artist passed on the baton to his young successor. Calleja is surely a singer here to stay.

Richard Fairman



PHOTOGRAPHY: CLIVE BARDA/ARENA/PAL. MATHIAS BOTHOR/DECCA





## LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

He conducts the best orchestras, yet devotes his time to nurturing young talent. He's of an age where he can stand still, yet continues to explore new ideas. **Daniel Harding** pays tribute to fellow conductor **Claudio Abbado**

### Winner

*Claudio Abbado, conductor*

I have known Claudio for 20 years. I'm lucky because I've heard him conduct so often – *Pelléas* in London, *Wozzeck* in Salzburg, Mahler's Sixth with the Berlin Phil... Claudio was the reason I wanted to be a conductor. For me, he's the biggest living inspiration; if I could have anyone's natural gift, I would have his.

Claudio doesn't like talking about music – he's too good at doing it. The classic conversation with him goes something like this: 'Mendelssohn? Ah yes, Mendelssohn – beautiful music...' And that's it. He goes off into a dream and remembers how lovely it is.

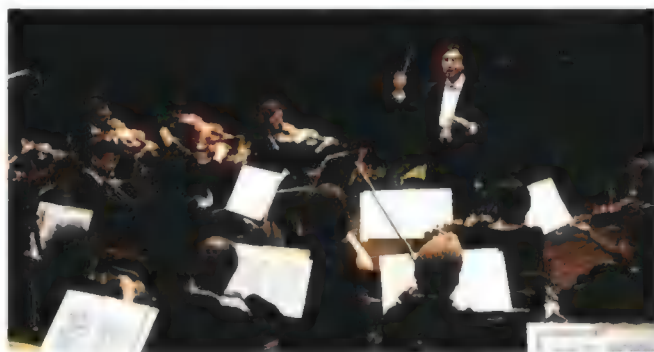
But the whole limp, vague impression he gives is such an act. When he starts to make music, he can create the most devastating tension. He can look so floppy and relaxed and yet bring something to the most astonishing, feverish level.

One of the first times I saw him rehearsing – Mahler's Fourth with the Berlin Phil – Claudio looked completely as if he had no interest in what was going on. And then the concert was completely astonishing. What he does in rehearsals is make sure that people in the orchestra know who they should be listening to. It's like the Vienna Phil – in rehearsals, the orchestra collect information but their attention is elsewhere. For the performance, it comes back at you tenfold.

I've talked to people who played with Kleiber and apparently his conducting was so compelling that the musicians were like marionettes. Claudio is very different. He gets his own way, but I've only heard him raise his voice three or four times. It's something that Karajan was a master at, too – this thing of following and at the same time leading. He gives musicians the space to play – he can nudge the tiniest things without it feeling like he's strangling anyone.

Claudio was never going to be the guy who said, 'Now I'm grand and can do what I want, so I'm going to play the same five pieces over and over again.' If you listen to the old recordings of Mozart with the LSO and then the same repertoire 30 years later with Orchestra Mozart, it's completely different. He's never pretended to be a period-instrument expert but he's always wanted to learn from different ideas and adapt. It's the same with his approach to new music – he can then return to familiar pieces and look at them afresh.

When Claudio founded the European Union and Gustav Mahler Youth Orchestras it was a win-win situation – he is incredibly patient with young people but at the same time he gets to make music with the best young musicians eating out of his hand. It's astonishing how many of today's musicians have come through his youth orchestras. In a way, his vision has left an imprint on every orchestra in Europe.



Visit [iTunes.com/gramawards](http://iTunes.com/gramawards) (full details on page 29) for a selection of Claudio Abbado's greatest recordings, as selected by Gramophone, and now available at a special celebratory price. The offer is available until November 30.

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## THE PIANO AWARD

A new prize, introduced this year, celebrates the career of one of today's most respected musicians

### Winner

*Murray Perahia*

He's a little genius' – a BBC colleague in conversation with me on returning from jury service at the Leeds International Piano Competition in 1972. I remember hearing Murray Perahia for the first time and what he was playing: Mendelssohn's Sonata in E major, Op 6. From the word go, everyone recognised his exceptional sensibility and the finish and lyrical naturalness of his playing, but the extent of his development was not foreseen. Excellence in Mozart might have been predicted: the set of the concertos he began to make in the late 1970s with the English Chamber Orchestra, playing and directing, has not been surpassed as a version on modern instruments. But in the 1980s and '90s, largely thanks to advice from and a friendship with Horowitz, his playing acquired the command of a larger scale, with more sharply defined declamation and more room in the frame for the music to breathe. This informed wonderful recordings of Bach (the *English Suites*, *Goldberg Variations*, the concertos and partitas), Handel suites and Scarlatti too, as well as Beethoven and later composers. Chopin came to the fore after Bach, as if in natural sequence, with the Ballades, notably, and then the most distinguished of all modern discs of the Etudes. There has been chamber music and accompanying singers, Mozart and Schubert duets with Radu Lupu, the Chopin and Mendelssohn concertos – too much to itemise. There was conducting, additionally, after a hand/thumb injury threatened to terminate his playing career. To everything he has touched, Murray Perahia has brought distinction and a musical ease that has seemed effortless. I've no doubt it wasn't! It is given to few artists to renew our experience of a wide range of great music as vividly as he has done, while appearing to impose themselves on it so lightly.

Stephen Plaistow





To celebrate Murray Perahia's Piano Award and his 40 years recording for CBS/Sony Classical, we've gathered together all his reviews published in *Gramophone*, along with a selection of his interviews. Read this free exclusive digital magazine at [exacteditions.com/gramophone/murrayperahia](http://exacteditions.com/gramophone/murrayperahia) or scan the QR code (right).





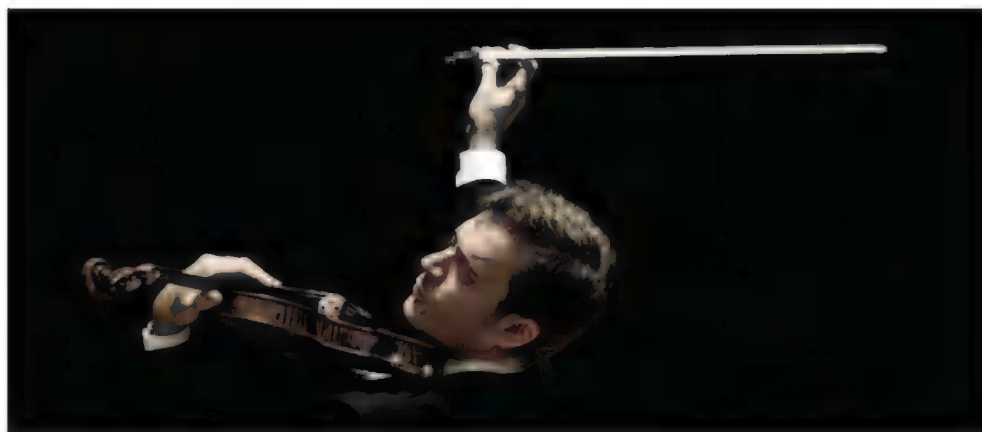
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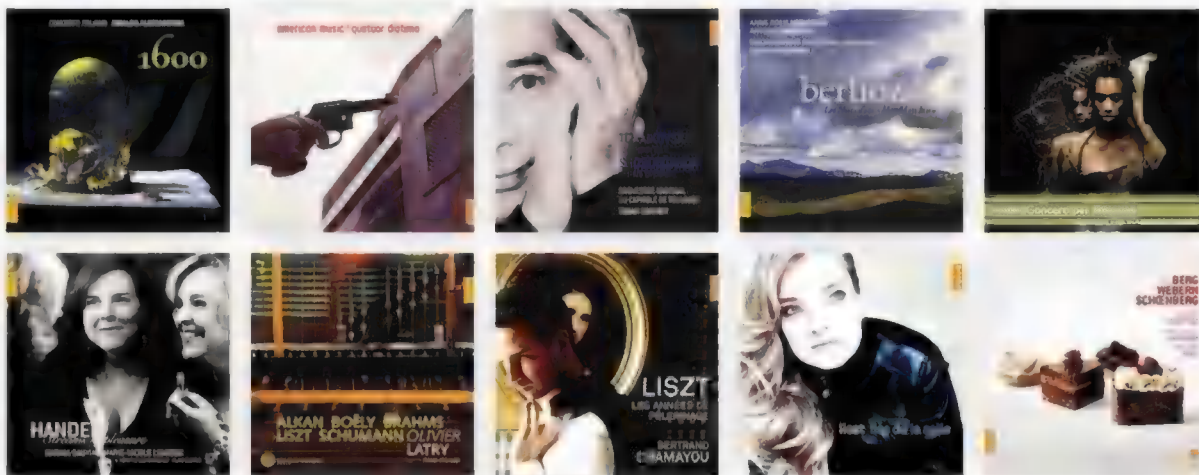
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## LABEL OF THE YEAR

An innovative French label with a beautiful style of its own

### Winner *Naïve*

**T**he name may imply a certain amateur, let's-make-it-up-as-we-go-along approach but there's nothing at all naïve about Naïve: this is a label with real personality and a palpable sense of knowing where it's going.

It's hard to say what's the most striking feature of our new Label of the Year but immediate impact is provided by the stunning packaging, where superb, artistic photography and an often wry sense of humour ensure that, even before you've heard a note of music, your imagination is engaged. And the artist roster – what a line-up of musicians, each of whom has something to say and invariably in a way that is just a little bit different! Take the Moldovan violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja; here is a player who doesn't seem to understand the concept of 'playing it safe'. Her philosophy seems to be 'this music speaks to me in a particular way and I'm going to react to it how I feel, not how tradition dictates. And if you don't like it, sorry!' And of course it works.

Naïve's singer stable, too, is magnificent, embracing Sandrine Piau, Marie-Nicole Lemieux, Sara Mingardo and, the most recent signing, Anne Sofie von Otter – each one a unique talent. Naïve's matching of repertoire with artist, too, is as sure as it is imaginative.

The Naïve roster is a rich one, with Marc Minkowski and his Musiciens du Louvre offering a new slant on many 'core' works, such as Bach's B minor Mass or the complete Schubert symphonies. The pianist Bertrand Chamayou celebrated Liszt's *Années de pèlerinage* that drew adulation from all quarters, *Gramophone* very much included. Another sure-fire success is that magnificent choral group Accentus, honed into an ensemble of considerable virtuosity by Laurence Equilbey – and Accentus's ambition when it comes to exploring repertoire is to be applauded.

At the heart of the Naïve catalogue is the Vivaldi Edition, a project that is fast becoming one of the wonders of recorded music, and this year's addition of the opera *Teuzzone* found Jordi Savall presiding with his characteristic flair. (And not to forget the wonderful disc of bassoon concertos that vied for an Award.)

And so we take our hats off to Didier Martin and his superb team for a great year of magnificent discs. Long may Naïve continue to add lustre, not only to the French record scene but to the world of classical music in general.

James Jolly



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Southbank Sinfonia attending a workshop  
with Vladimir Ashkenazy.



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# YOUNG ARTIST OF THE YEAR

A brilliant young British pianist who is already being compared to the masters

## Winner

*Benjamin Grosvenor*

EFG  International

**P**henomenal talent is often discovered early – but 11 years old, the age at which Benjamin Grosvenor won the keyboard section of the BBC Young Musician of the Year (the year Nicola Benedetti won the overall prize) is remarkably early indeed. Grosvenor's name has been talked about ever since. The first recording to appear was a recital in 2010 called 'This & That', which led critic Bryce Morrison to write of Grosvenor's 'endless poetic finesse and resource', before concluding: 'To call such playing that of a master-pianist will invite accusation of exaggeration and hyperbole – but what else can I say?' He was not alone in his view and the following year Decca signed Grosvenor, making him the first British pianist since the likes of Clifford Curzon and Moura Lympany to join the label. And within months, aged just

19, he also became the youngest ever soloist to perform at the First Night of the Proms, when he played Liszt's Second Piano Concerto with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Jiří Bělohlávek.

Of his first Decca disc, of music by Ravel, Chopin and Liszt – which has won the Instrumental Award category this year (see page 49) – Rob Cowan writes: 'This is the artistry of an era I thought was long gone, the era of Cortot, Horowitz, Friedman, Cherkassky.' Illustrious company indeed; and, just to remind you, the remarkably gifted, masterly musician Grosvenor is still just 20 years old. What a glorious career surely lies ahead of him. **Martin Cullingford**



# SPECIAL HISTORIC AWARD

A unique musical and historical document merits special recognition

## Winner

*Václav Talich – Live 1939*

**O**n March 15, 1939, Hitler made a triumphal entry into Prague. The region had become a German protectorate but seething beneath the surface was the burning presence of Czech patriotism. Less than three months later, in early June, the great Czech conductor Václav Talich was at the city's National Theatre leading an augmented Czech Philharmonic for a fiery performance of Smetana's *Má vlast*, or 'My Fatherland', six dramatic tone-poems about the nation's soul, history and countryside. Talich had already recorded the cycle on 78s and was to re-record it on two further occasions; but this live performance is something else again, an impassioned affirmation not only of the music but of a people tragically caught in the throes of a despotic occupation. Each performance is tailed by a thunderous volley of applause but come the finale, where the

two main themes combine in defiant counterpoint, the packed hall's response suggests the thrill of an Olympic victory. And that's not all: suddenly, after roughly a minute's worth of ecstatic applause, the entire audience spontaneously breaks into the Czech national anthem and the full import of what we have just heard registers. There is nothing else quite like it in the entire realm of recorded music and the Dvořák *Slavonic Dances*, Op 72, from a concert given just a week or so later at the National Theatre, press all the same buttons.

**Rob Cowan**



**Smetana *Má vlast*  
Czech Philharmonic  
Orchestra / Václav Talich  
Remastering engineer**

Jan Lžičar  
Supraphon © ② SU40652 (11/11)



## RECORDING OF THE YEAR

Impeccably performed, recorded and presented, this extraordinary release of Schütz's masterpiece embodies everything a Recording of the Year should be

### Winner

*Schütz Musicalische Exequien*

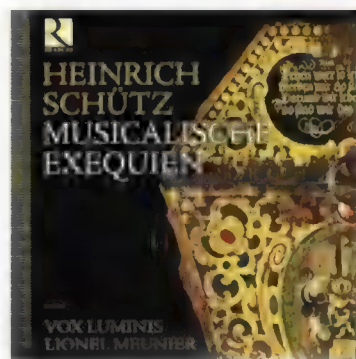
**T**hankfully the art of dying was still taken very seriously in Baroque Germany, as Schütz's *Musicalische Exequien* from 1636 and Bach's *Trauer Ode* a century later attest. Yet it is the former masterpiece where, in the face of the ravaging Thirty Years War, *ars moriendi* is communicated afresh with such extraordinary devotional assurance.

These qualities are rendered with a delicious, ruminative prayerfulness and unforced rhetoric by Lionel Meunier's Vox Luminis. Listen to 'Ach wie elend ist unser Zeit' ('O how wretched is our time on earth') and you'll hear the kind of textural simplicity, intuitive pacing and gentle accentuation which evokes, with mesmerising authority, just how fervently the congregation for Prince Heinrich von Reuss's meticulously planned funeral must have trusted in the power of resurrection.

If this is not a vocal ensemble over-endowed with impressive individual turns, it delivers instead a profoundly focused, personal and grounded 'text' of corporate luminosity – and this goes, too, for four masterly funeral motets, including *Das ist je gewisslich wahr*, that remarkable gem dedicated to the memory of the other great German of the period, Johann Hermann Schein, confirming that Schütz's genius knows few bounds.

What strikes me principally about this wonderful disc is how Vox Luminis delight as much in the abstract brilliance of Schütz's melodic and harmonic invention as in the mere projection of words – which is why these performances deserve to reach audiences beyond early-music boffins and receive a broad mainstream listenership, like Brahms, for whom Schütz was a guiding star for his own *Deutsches Requiem*.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood



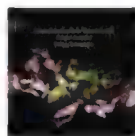
BAROQUE  
VOCAL

**Schütz** *Musicalische Exequien*

**Vox Luminis / Lionel Meunier**

**Producer and Engineer** Jérôme Lejeune

Ricercar (P) RIC 311 (A/11) 100 votes



**Bach** *Mass in B minor*

**Collegium Vocale, Ghent / Philippe Herreweghe**

PHI (M) (2) LPH004 (8/12) 81



**Zelenka** *Responsoria. Lamentations*

**Collegium Vocale 1704; Collegium 1704 /**

**Václav Luks**

Accent (P) (2) ACC 24259 (8/12) 75





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# BAROQUE INSTRUMENTAL

## Winner

### *Bach Orchestral Suites*

Over the years, we've come to expect outstanding performances from the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra and this issue certainly does not disappoint. The four Orchestral Suites are supremely life-affirming music, fully realised here with playing that emphasises rhythmic vitality and poise, as well as giving inspiring expression to Bach's wonderful melodic lines. There are some exceptional individual contributions: brilliant violin-playing in the Overture of the Third Suite, a beautifully matched trio of oboes and bassoon enlivening many moments in the First Suite and, in the Second Suite, Karl Kaiser's immaculate flute-playing, with spectacular, stylish embellishments to the repeated sections.

The tempi are often quite brisk but never excessively fast and the orchestra's internal balance is especially good; in the two D major Suites, the trumpets uninhibitedly promote a festive atmosphere but are sensitive enough to allow other instruments to take the lead when their parts are more important. You may not agree with the Freiburgers' refusal to over-dot in the overtures but you'll have to agree that, through persuasive phrasing, they perform these sections entirely convincingly. Indeed, conviction shows on every track of the set. This is music-making to lift the spirits. **Duncan Druce**



**Bach Orchestral Suites**

**Freiburg Baroque Orchestra /  
Gottfried von der Goltz**

**Producer** Martin Sauer **Engineer** René Möller

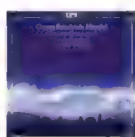
Harmonia Mundi (F) (2) HMC90 2113/14 (1/12) 98 votes



**Handel Concerti grossi, Op 3**

**Concerto Copenhagen / Lars Ulrik Mortensen**

CPO (F) CPO777 488-2 (6/12) 79



**Vivaldi The French Connection, Vol 2**

**La Serenissima / Adrian Chandler** *vn*

Avie (F) AV2218 (10/11) 72



# CHAMBER

## Winner

### *Schumann Complete Works for Piano Trio*

This was obviously a special disc when I first encountered it in 2011. It does for the piano trios what the Zehetmair Quartet had so triumphantly done for the Quartets Nos 1 and 3, their recording of which won a *Gramophone* Award in 2003.

For anyone whose notion of Schumann is still one of a downwards slope from youthful élan to tragic mental impairment, this is the gentlest of kicks in the teeth. Andsnes has already proved himself to be an artist sympathetic to Schumann's chamber music and in the Tetzlaff siblings he has the perfect partners. They imbue the more lyrical writing with tremendous affection and beauty of tone and they also understand that Schumann's music is fragile: in insensitive hands his urgent rhythms can become incessant, his arching, wide-slung melodic lines merely ungainly. Here, instead, we find a springy buoyancy to the faster music that gives it a wonderful energy. They're true to the notes on the page but never dogmatic in the slightest. Add to this a bonus in the Op 88 *Fantasiestücke* and the *Six Etudes in Canonic Form* in a sympathetic arrangement by Theodor Kirchner, all captured in a beautifully balanced recording, and it's a deserving winner.

**Harriet Smith**



**Schumann Complete Works for Piano Trio**

**Christian Tetzlaff** *vn* **Tanja Tetzlaff** *vc*

**Leif Ove Andsnes** *pf*

**Producer** John Fraser **Engineer** Arne Akselberg

EMI (M) (2) 094180-2 (7/11) 113 votes



**Schumann Three String Quartets, Op 41**

**Doric Quartet**

Chandos (F) CHAN10692 (12/11) 112



**Ives Four Violin Sonatas**

**Hilary Hahn** *vn* **Valentina Lisitsa** *pf*

DG (F) 477 9435GH (11/11) 109





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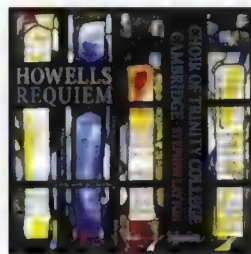
ZURICH

# CHORAL

## Winner

### *Howells Requiem*

Even by the exalted standards of previous offerings from Stephen Layton and his gifted Trinity College undergraduates, this is an exceptionally fine release. Its rewarding contents span nearly five decades, from the exquisite anthem *Salve regina* that the 23-year-old Howells wrote in 1916 for Richard Terry's Westminster Cathedral Choir, via the double pillars of those resplendent settings of the Evening Canticles fashioned for Gloucester and St Paul's in 1946 and 1950 respectively, all the way up to 1964 and the motet *Take him, earth, for cherishing*, a sublime treatment of Prudentius's medieval Latin poem *Hymnus circa exsequias defuncti*, commissioned for a special service in memory of President Kennedy. Even more affecting is the Requiem of 1932: completed three years before the death of the composer's son, Michael (who succumbed to polio aged just nine), it contains material to which Howells was to return for his consolatory magnum opus, *Hymnus Paradisi*. Performances throughout are beyond criticism in their unruffled composure, keen sense of poetry and abundant communicative spirit. What's more, the sound – whether emanating from Lincoln Cathedral or the magical surroundings of Ely Cathedral's Lady Chapel – is gloriously true. A worthy winner indeed. **Andrew Achenbach**



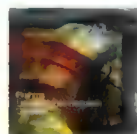
**Howells Requiem**  
**Choir of Trinity College, Cambridge /**  
**Stephen Layton**

**Producer** Adrian Peacock **Engineer** David Hinitt  
Hyperion Ⓢ CDA67914 (6/12) 106 votes (more first places)



**Poulenc 'Half Monk / Half Rascal'**  
**Danish National Vocal Ensemble / Stephen Layton**

OUR Recordings Ⓢ B 226906 (6/12) 106



**Brahms Ein deutsches Requiem**  
**Soloists; Monteverdi Choir; Orchestre**  
**Révolutionnaire et Romantique /**  
**Sir John Eliot Gardiner**

Soli Deo Gloria Ⓢ SDG706 (5/12) 85

# CONCERTO

## Winner

### *Beethoven & Berg Violin Concertos*

Working with Claudio Abbado, Isabelle Faust says, is like being given a key to the magic of music. It was he who wanted to record the Berg with her. It came first, as it does in the order here, and when the Beethoven Concerto suggested itself as partner to it, placing these two masterpieces in such close proximity 'was something quite new to me'.

Wise of her to defer to the great man's guidance, acknowledged as an inspiration throughout. Yet Isabelle Faust's contribution is as personable as one could wish, alive with her own intelligence and musical personality. She projects her role as soloist on an equal footing with the orchestra and excels particularly in the Berg Concerto, a protagonist who carries to perfection its narrative dimension and knows when to merge into the orchestral texture.

The Orchestra Mozart play beautifully and I would say these versions are models of artistic and human discipline, meticulously probing Berg's and Beethoven's intentions but conveying also a sense that such peaks of human achievement are something you assume from within, not take by force from without.

**Stephen Plaistow**



**Beethoven. Berg Violin Concertos**  
**Isabelle Faust vn**

**Orchestra Mozart / Claudio Abbado**  
**Producer** Martin Sauer **Engineer** Philipp Knop  
Harmonia Mundi Ⓢ HMC90 2105 (3/12) 118 votes



**Shostakovich Piano Concertos**  
**Alexander Melnikov pf**  
**Mahler Chamber Orchestra / Teodor Currentzis**

Harmonia Mundi Ⓢ HMC90 2104 (5/12) 105



**Bartók Violin Concertos. Viola Concerto**  
**James Ehnes vn/va**  
**BBC Philharmonic / Gianandrea Noseda**

Chandos Ⓢ CHAN10690 (11/11) 97

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characterised by Keenlyside"*

*Financial Times*

*"...a beautifully judged recording, exquisitely sung;  
poignant but never sentimental"*

*The Observer*



# CONTEMPORARY

## Winner

### *Rautavaara Percussion Concerto. Cello Concerto No 2*

**R**autavaara's dozen-plus concertos have hitherto been the Cinderellas of his orchestral output, often appearing as fillers to recordings of the symphonies and choral works or in multi-composer collections where their impact has been diluted. The only one to have achieved wide international currency is *Cantus arcticus*, the evocative 'concerto for birds and orchestra', so Ondine's headlining of what are billed as the last of Rautavaara's concertos has finally placed them centre stage. And what a magnificent, highly contrasted double they make. The vibrant Percussion Concerto, *Incantations* (2008), delivered with coruscating virtuosity by Colin Currie, is a strongly drawn triptych, rhythmically exciting and superbly orchestrated. Truls Mørk's beautifully controlled performance of the valedictory Second Cello Concerto, *Towards the Horizon* (2008-09), is as remarkable, caressing out the subtleties of the variation-form structure in which the soloist rarely seems not to be playing! The support from the excellent Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra under John Storgårds (who seems to go from strength to strength on the podium) and Ondine's sensational, vivid sound set the seal on a superb Contemporary Award-winner.

Guy Rickards



**Rautavaara** Percussion Concerto. Cello Concerto No 2 **Colin Currie** perc **Truls Mørk** vc  
**Helsinki PO / John Storgårds**  
**Producer** Seppo Siirala **Engineer** Enno Mäemets  
Ondine © ODE1178-2 (4/12) 89 votes



**Nørgård** Violin Concertos. Spaces of Time  
**Peter Herresthal** vn **Ida Mo** pf  
**Stavanger Symphony Orchestra / Rolf Gupta**  
BIS © BIS-CD1872 (6/12) 88



**Saariaho** D'om le vrai sens.  
Laterna Magica. Leino Songs  
**Kari Kriikku** cl **Anu Komi** sop  
**Finnish RSO / Sakari Oramo**  
Ondine © ODE1173-2 (12/11) 83

# EARLY MUSIC

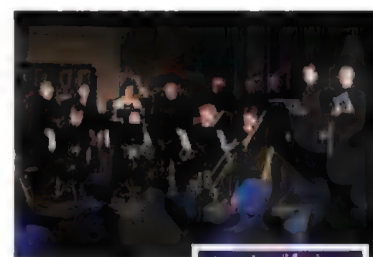
## Winner

### *Victoria Sacred Works*

**T**his 10-disc set of the sacred music of Victoria was released to coincide with the 400th anniversary of his death in 1611 and, although not a complete survey of his work, is nevertheless the most considerable proportion of his output yet released together on disc.

One of the most enjoyable characteristics of Iberian choral music of this period is the askance perspective Victoria and his contemporaries had on the rules of polyphony that, by Palestrina's benchmark, were sacred and absolute: it is that variety and unpredictability that keeps this music engaging enough to support 10 discs and 90 pieces by the same composer in one place. But unless a choir embraces the music in that same spirit of insubordination, many of its rhythms, harmonies and audacious dissonances will pass by unnoticed. This is one of the great strengths of the Ensemble Plus Ultra, who embrace the performances of all these pieces with an enthusiastic sense of anything being possible. Ultimately, though, it is just deeply human and emotional music that they perform not only with great tenderness but so simply that one is struck every time – as if for the first time – by its crystalline, uncomplicated beauty.

Caroline Gill



**Victoria** Sacred Works  
**Ensemble Plus Ultra / Michael Noone**  
**Producers and Engineers** Adrian Hunter,  
Albert Moraleda, Philip Hobbs & Julia Thomas  
Archiv © 10 477 9747AB10 (11/11) 127 votes



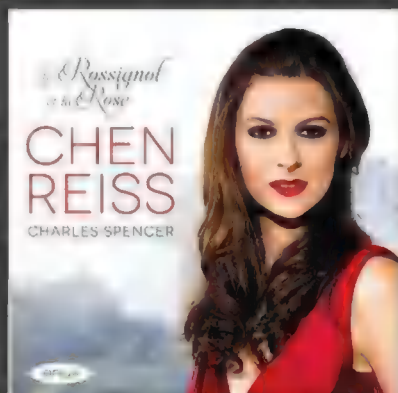
**Ciconia** Opera omnia  
**Diabolus in Musica / Antoine Guerber;**  
**La Morra / Michal Gondko**  
Ricercar © 2 RIC316 (12/11) 95



**Josquin Desprez** Missa de Beata Virgine, etc  
**The Tallis Scholars / Peter Phillips**  
Gimell © CDGIM044 (12/11) 91

# onyx

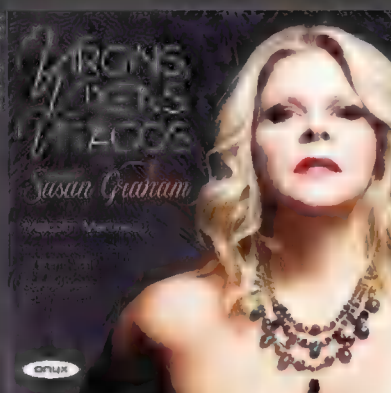
ONYX 4104



## Le Rossignol et la Rose Chen Reiss

Chen Reiss's debut ONYX album *Le Rossignol et la Rose* was praised by Gramophone for its 'standard setting' Mozart and Haydn arias. "What all too might have been of him, though I knew him not, right after nightfall told his story to the stars, and now I see him." Songs inspired by the Nightingale and the Rose legend by Schubert, Kretsch, Tietz, Brahms, Hahn, Meyerbeer, Mahler & Strauss and others.

ONYX 4105



## Virgins, Vixens & Viragos Susan Graham

Paradise to Sodom... with the Virgin Mary, Mighty Lady Marcella and the girl sharing the boy from Tarsus in the Tumbel del Fuego.... A show-stopping new recording from Susan and Malcoher Martinelli. Susan Graham delivers a wonderfully suave and powerful performance in a 'delightful' (The Guardian) Hall of Fame Opera Today.

ONYX 4106



## Liszt & Mahler songs Anne Schwanewilms

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## Martinů - 6 Symphonies Jiří Bělohlávek

You won't find a more passionate champion than Bělohlávek who just the music in his blood. His zeal at interpreting Martinů's symphonies and national works - evidenced time and again in these live performances by the BBC Symphony Orchestra.

"Major triumph" (The Guardian) "Jiří Bělohlávek conducts the BBC Symphony Orchestra in Czech music. It's just what the world needs." (The Times)

The Times

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The Guardian Times

Gramophone Award

Gramophone

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## Mahler Des Knaben Wunderhorn Wolfgang Holzmair

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## Dvorak & Schumann Piano Quintets Jonathan Biss Elias String Quartet

ONYX 4108



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ONYX 4102



## The Sea Henk Neven

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Gramophone (see review in THE debut CD 'Auf dem Meer' ONYX 4031)

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# HISTORIC

## Winner

### *Chopin Etudes*

This is the recording of Chopin's two sets of Etudes that the young Maurizio Pollini made in 1960, shortly after his success at the sixth International Chopin Competition in Warsaw that year. For some reason Pollini never sanctioned its release, a decision that was to be just the first in a series of (for his indulgent record label) exasperating and (in retrospect) almost comical behaviours that eventually led to his departure from EMI. That company eventually relinquished him before his contract was up, deeming that his career was going nowhere; of course, with DG, he went on to make a string of classics over the past four decades, including a remake of this repertoire.

It's hard to surmise what led to Pollini's dislike of these sessions. Some may prefer the grander DG recording but these performances flow seemingly effortlessly, with his famous technical acumen a given and an uncanny insight into the many moods Chopin explores. Bryce Morrison invoked Pollini's 'early superfine brilliance, his aristocratic musicianship, his patrician ideal' in this music, making it all the more puzzling why the highly strung teenage pianist should have set his face against the disc's release. It's appropriate in the great man's 70th birthday year that these early thoughts on this wondrous music are at last revealed to the pianophile world. **David Thresher**



**Chopin Etudes, Opp 10 & 25 (1960)**

**Maurizio Pollini** *pf*

**Producer** Peter Andry **Engineer** Neville Boyling

**Remastering engineer** Paul Bailly

Testament (M) SBT1473 (1/12) 123 votes



'Anthology of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Vol 6 - 1990-2000'

**Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra / Various conductors**

RCO Live (B) (4) RCO11004 (11/11) 101



'Glenn Gould In Concert 1951-60'

**Glenn Gould** *pf*

West Hill Radio Archives (B) (6) WHRA6038 (9/11) 95



# INSTRUMENTAL

## Winner

### *Chopin, Liszt & Ravel Piano Works*

The virtuosity is easy to write about, and there's plenty of it. And yet, in the context of what makes this CD really exceptional, mere digital dexterity is hardly the main issue. Benjamin Grosvenor's art is in what might flippantly be called the small print, those intimate moments that only a genuine artist understands. True, he has the measure of Chopin's most mercurial Scherzo, the Fourth, which he performs with a subtle brand of bravura, and his coltish exuberance in the other three Scherzos is much to be admired. His Ravel is gripping, even though lurking demons are kept safely at bay. But perhaps the most telling track is the shortest, an ethereal canvas by Liszt called *En rêve* where every phrase is tellingly placed, every colour skilfully applied, whether with the subtle smudge of a thumb or the bolder stroke of a brush. While listening I thought to myself, this is the artistry of an era I thought was long gone, the era of Cortot, Horowitz, Friedman, Cherkassky. You see, their sort of playing isn't just the province of 'wrinklies' like me. There's a hugely gifted 20-year-old out there who can actually make that world come alive, who lives it as authentically as they did. We should rejoice that a voice such as his is thriving among us.

**Rob Cowan**



**Chopin, Liszt, Ravel Piano Works**

**Benjamin Grosvenor** *pf*

**Producer** Simon Kiln

**Engineer** Arne Akselberg

Decca (F) 478 3206DH (10/11) 132 votes



**Schubert Piano Sonatas, D840, D850 & D899, etc**

**Paul Lewis** *pf*

Harmonia Mundi (F) (2) HMC90 2115/16 (2/12) 131



**Chopin Complete Waltzes**

**Stephen Hough** *pf*

Hyperion (C) CDA67849 (10/11) 125



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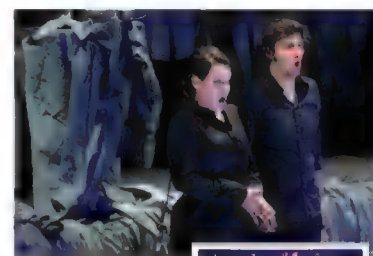
## Winner

### Beethoven *Fidelio*

Abbado's second Berlin Philharmonic symphony cycle, recorded live in Rome in 2001, thrust him more or less unexpectedly into the ranks of the immortals where Beethoven is concerned. Seven years after that, in Reggio Emilia in 2008, he conducted his first *Fidelio*, followed two years later by a pair of semi-staged Lucerne Festival performances from which this recording thrillingly derives.

The revised dialogue provided by stage director Tatjana Gürbaca is not without controversy. In Act 1, her cuts and rewrites remove all hint of domesticity and private affection; in Act 2, she omits just about everything. The result is Beethoven's lofty Singspiel recast as musical meta-theatre. Happily, the cast is as fine as any that might be assembled today and Abbado himself conducts a performance the like of which we have not heard since the time of Furtwängler. It is a no-frills yet at the same time deeply expressive reading which goes like a bolted arrow directly to the heart of the matter. If *Fidelio* speaks as no other opera does of the miraculous resilience of the human spirit, Claudio Abbado's late re-creation of it serves only to compound that miracle.

Richard Osborne



#### Beethoven *Fidelio*

**Stemme; Kaufmann; Lucerne Festival Orchestra /**

**Claudio Abbado; Producer** Sid McLauchlan

**Engineers** Jonathan Stokes & Neil Hutchinson

Decca (M) ② 478 2551DH2 (9/11) 109 votes



#### Wagner *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*

**Dohmann; Smith; Henschel; Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra / Marek Janowski**

Pentatone (F) ④ PTC5186 402 (3/12) 87



#### Massenet *Werther*

**Villazón; Koch; Orchestra of the Royal Opera House / Sir Antonio Pappano**

DG (F) ② 477 9340GH2 (6/12) 86

# ORCHESTRAL

## Winner

### Martinů *Symphonies*

Some other reviews of this set have paralleled the grace and elegance of Jiří Bělohlávek's conducting with Martinů's music in these works. I could not agree less. The six symphonies of Martinů, like the contemporary late works of Béla Bartók, are the war pieces of an artist in a state of pain and exile that is both personal and political. Their lyrical moments, perhaps, can be graceful and elegant although one suspects, as in the tricky (and, in some aspects, most modern) No 6, that this relative repose is either deliberately cynical or a mocking quotation of other composers who can afford to be at rest at such a time in the world's affairs. That pain and stress are clearly, and superbly, realised here.

Czech music, Martinů especially (remember also the performances of *Julietta* and *The Epic of Gilgamesh*), has naturally been a speciality of Bělohlávek's BBC Symphony Orchestra tenure. The orchestra's playing in the six 2009-10 London Barbican concerts excerpted here shows a special and alert assimilation of an idiom that is just as tricky as the more 'contemporary' repertoire the players have to master. It's also apt that it is with this ensemble that Bělohlávek finally completes a cycle (after starts on Chandos and Supraphon with the Czech Philharmonic) of works so obviously dear to him.

Mike Ashman



#### Martinů *Symphonies Nos 1-6*

**BBC Symphony Orchestra / Jiří Bělohlávek**

**Producer** Ann McKay **Engineers** Neil Pemberton,

Susan Thomas & Philip Burwell

Onyx (B) ③ ONYX4061 (10/11) 128 votes



#### Beethoven *Symphonies Nos 1-9. Overtures*

**Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra / Riccardo Chailly**

Decca (M) ⑤ 478 3492 (A/11) 114



#### Stravinsky *The Rite of Spring. The Firebird - Suite. Scherzo à la russe*

**Budapest Festival Orchestra / Iván Fischer**

Channel Classics (F) ② CCSSA32112 (5/12) 111



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# RECITAL

Sponsored by Mrs Joan L Jones

## Winner

*'Arias for Guadagni'*

**H**orace Walpole named a racehorse after him, David Garrick gave him acting lessons and he was Gluck's first Orfeo. But it has taken surprisingly long for someone to produce an intelligently chosen and stylishly performed recital exploring the career of the castrato Cosimo Gaetano Guadagni (1728-92). Reputedly a 'wild and careless singer' when he first came to London, his untapped potential was soon talent-scouted by Handel, who nurtured the castrato in the early 1750s. Heroic male roles in *Theodora* and *The Choice of Hercules* were both written for him; the finest arias from each are performed sublimely by Iestyn Davies, who also includes vividly contrasting arias the great castrato sang in revivals of *Saul* and *Belshazzar* (these also provide the impeccable Arcangelo with opportunities to show off their harpist and trumpeters respectively). The most enduring recital discs take listeners on a journey and the compelling chronological narrative here shows how styles changed from late-Baroque Handel to proto-Classical Gluck in the space of only a decade, with the gaps in between filled by the fruits of Davies's personal research in collaboration with scholar Patricia Howard: we hear intriguing arias by Hasse, Arne, JC Smith and even Guadagni himself. Played sweetly and sung eloquently – a worthy winner! **David Vickers**



### 'Arias for Guadagni'

**Iestyn Davies** *countertenor*

**Arcangelo / Jonathan Cohen**

**Producer** Adrian Peacock **Engineer** David Hinitt

Hyperion Ⓢ CDA67924 (8/12) 72 votes



### Vivaldi Opera Arias

**Roberta Invernizzi** *sop*

**La Risonanza / Fabio Bonizzoni** *hpd*

Glossa Ⓢ GCD922901 (7/12) 61



### Wagner Scenes

**René Pape** *bar*

**Staatskapelle Berlin / Daniel Barenboim**

DG Ⓢ 477 6617 (7/11) 54

# SOLO VOCAL

## Winner

*'Songs of War'*

**R**eactions to this disc's concept and programme – as well as the sepia soldier on the cover – can be predicted: it's an important disc, no doubt, but a bitter pill. Great singing, however, is never a bitter experience, especially in a recital selected and sequenced with such care, and with Simon Keenlyside drawing on all he knows from singing opera (the heartier side of his baritone conveying patriotic determination) and Lieder (with intimate utterances projecting the personal cost of war).

The booklet-notes introduce the 29 songs by Butterworth, Finzi, Ireland, Vaughan Williams, Kurt Weill and others by pointing out that war celebrates life as well as confronting death. But in the very first song – 'An Incident' from Ned Rorem's cycle *War Scenes* – Keenlyside isn't afraid to be confrontational, with the piano's atonal turbulence and semi-spoken vocal lines describing a soldier with brain matter oozing from his head. It sets a tone that dramatically reinvigorates the disc's more simple, understated ballads, including familiar verses such as 'When I was one and twenty' from *A Shopshire Lad* – all underscored by the disarmingly empathetic Keenlyside and pianist Malcolm Martineau. A peak achievement for both. **David Patrick Stearns**



### 'Songs of War'

**Simon Keenlyside** *bar* **Malcolm Martineau** *pf*

**Producer** Mark Brown

**Engineer** Julian Millard

Sony Classical Ⓢ 88697 94424-2 (2/12) 94 votes



### Britten Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings

**Finzi Dies natalis** **Mark Padmore** *ten*

**Britten Sinfonia / Jacqueline Shave**

Harmonia Mundi Ⓢ HMU80 7552 (6/12) 85



### Britten Songs and Proverbs of William Blake, etc

**Roderick Williams** *bar* **Iain Burnside** *pf*

Naxos Ⓢ 8 572600 (6/12) 81

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# DVD DOCUMENTARY

## Winner

### *'Music Makes a City'*

**A**t a time when the Louisville Orchestra is one among many embattled American arts institutions, this extended documentary strikes an elegiac rather than a polemical note and proves all the more resonant for it. The story begins during a previous economic downturn, exacerbated by the 1937 floods that crippled the Kentucky community. Its transformation into a centre for new music was the brainchild of Mayor Charles Farnsley, visionary Democrat and music maven who espoused the Confucian notion of the performing arts as a magnet for wealth and power. Rejecting the importation of star soloists, he advocated a radical policy of commissioning original scores. Funding was secured for LP recordings under the ensemble's regular chief Robert Whitney and an international reputation followed.

The film proceeds by way of archival footage, static talking heads and substantial chunks of commissioned works set against sensitively composed images of the Ohio River. Bonus interviews catch the senior generation of American musicians in fine fettle, from the centenarian Elliott Carter to his near-nonagenarian antipode Ned Rorem. No dramatic reconstructions, no fashionable graphics; the only vaguely contemporary note is the voice-over of Louisville's Will Oldham (the singer known as Bonnie 'Prince' Billy). **David Gutman**



#### **'Music Makes a City'**

A film by **Owsley Brown III and Jerome Hiler**

Owsley Brown (F) (2) DVD 811063011090 (12/11) 125 votes



#### **'God's Fiddler: Jascha Heifetz'**

A film by **Peter Rosen**

EuroArts (F) (2) DVD 205 8538 (7/12) 123



#### **'Alfred Brendel on Music: Three Lectures'**

A film by **Mark Kidel**

C Major Entertainment (F) (2) DVD 703408 (A/11) 106

# DVD PERFORMANCE

## Winner

### *Bruckner Symphony No 5*

**P**ersonal touches, uncovered by familiarity and affection, bestow light and warmth on what some hear as a forbidding, even impersonal monument – the Verdian swells of the *Adagio*, the richly bucolic swing of the *Scherzo*'s countersubject – but this is not fireside Bruckner, rather a communally nurtured exploration through Bruckner's secret songs and public hymns.

A rarely encountered and special characteristic of the Lucerne Festival Orchestra is the way communal mastery and shared endeavour never overwhelm personal poetry, as much in the second violins' sweetly tensile launch of the finale's fugue as in countless oboe and clarinet solos. In the Fifth Bruckner found such a balance that his music had striven towards and which he perhaps never fully rediscovered. To find, sustain and never surrender a lyrical voice through the block-like construction of the *Allegro*, and even the contrapuntal stratagems of the finale as it works out how to arrive at a conclusion of now forever challenging, overwhelmingly positive force: this takes a special, even unique, band of musicians and friends who (we can see) love what they do, making chamber music on the grandest scale.

**Peter Quantrill**



#### **Bruckner Symphony No 5**

**Lucerne Festival Orchestra / Claudio Abbado**

Directed by **Michael Beyer**

Accentus (F) (2) DVD ACC20243 (8/12) 93 votes



#### **Lully Atys**

**Les Arts Florissants / William Christie**

Directed by **Jean-Marie Villégier**

FRA Productions (F) (2) DVD FRA006 (3/12) 91



#### **R Strauss Die Frau ohne Schatten**

**Soloists; Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra / Christian Thielemann**

Directed by **Christof Loy**

Opus Arte (F) (2) DVD OA1072D (8/12) 85

# hyperion NEW RELEASES

## WILLIAM BYRD

### *The Great Service*

The Cardinal's Masses are now available as the complete edition of Byrd's choral music. Their discovery of his Latin church music received the highest possible critical acclaim and the final volume won Gramophone Award of the Year. Now they turn to the composer's English settings and in particular *The Great Service*, described as 'the finest unaccompanied setting of the Service in the entire repertoire of English church music' upon its discovery in 1932.

**THE CARDINALS MUSIC**  
ANDREW CARWOOD conductor



CDA67937

## FELIX MENDELSSOHN

### *Violin Concertos*

Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E minor is one of the best-loved works of the genre. It's played here with brilliant and charm by a dazzling soloist, whose virtuosic versions of the concerto in the concerto have garnered great critical acclaim. Also recorded here is the early Violin Concerto in D minor, written when the composer was only thirteen.

**ALINA IBRAGIMOVA violin**  
**ORCHESTRA OF THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT**  
**VLADIMIR JUROWSKI conductor**



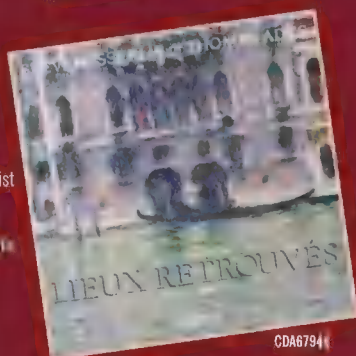
CDA67795

## MUSIC FOR CELLO & PIANO

### *Lieux retrouvés*

This recording presents French-born cello in partnership with a composer and a pianist of genius. It features classic works by Debussy and Ravel, and music written for Steven Isserlis by György Kurtág and Thomas Adès.

**STEVEN ISSERLIS cello**  
**THOMAS ADÈS piano**



CDA67941

## CLAUDE DEBUSSY

### *Solo Piano Music*

A new recording by Angela Hewitt, early in her career, with some particularly fine of Debussy's most delightful and evocative music, including the *Barcarade* and the *Clair de lune*.

**ANGELA HEWITT piano**



CDA67898

## BENJAMIN BRITTEN

### *A Ceremony of Carols & Saint Nicolas*

Two of Benjamin Britten's greatest Christmas works are performed by the choir of King's College, Cambridge and Stephen Layton. The cantata *Saint Nicolas* tells the story of the saint and his exploits, and features one of the composer's most beautiful songs. *A Ceremony of Carols* is a beautiful and joyful set of carols, written for treble voices.

**TRINITY COLLEGE CHOIR, CAMBRIDGE**  
**ALLAN CLAYTON (tenor), HOLST SINGERS**  
**CITY OF LONDON SINFONIA**  
**STEPHEN LAYTON conductor**



CDA67946

## ROBERT SCHUMANN

### *Liederlieds*

The vocal recital partner of Gerald Finley and Julius Drake returns in Schumann with the *Liederlieds* of the *Liederkreis* (The Circle of Songs) cycle, to texts by Heine and Eichendorff. Also included are the *Gedichte* (Poems) cycle, to texts by Heine.

**GERALD FINLEY baritone**  
**JULIUS DRAKE piano**



CDA67944



### *Advent at St Paul's*

'This truly rich advent feast is performed wonderfully well on all counts and can be highly recommended (Gramophone Award)'

**ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL CHOIR**  
**JOHN HENRY conductor**



CDH5543



### ANTONIO VIVALDI *Concerti con molti strumenti*

'Why mince words? This collection is one of the best Vivaldi records I have heard since I began listening to music 40 years ago. Every movement is first class' (American Record Guide)

A beautiful collection of musically sound concertos (1940-50 CD) - highly recommended (Fanfare, 1994)

**THE KING'S CONSORT**  
**ROBERT KING conductor**



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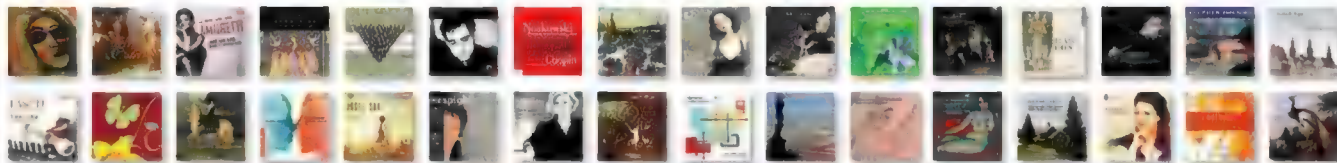
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# GRAMOPHONE *Reviews*

Awards 2012



Persuasive performance: Thomas Piffka and Patricia Petibon in Nemirova's staging of Berg's *Lulu* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 108**

## KEY TO SYMBOLS



### Gramophone Choice

We name the best 12 recordings reviewed in this issue



### Critic's Choice

Awarded by a reviewer to a recording which has proved distinctly rewarding



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(In box-sets, price is per disc)

## GRAMOPHONE *Reviewers*



Jed Distler

All musical styles have surrounded and consumed me since babyhood, from my mother's eclectic record collection to my first major piano teacher turning me on to Sviatoslav Richter, Janis Joplin, Earl Hines and Rossini's piano music in one fell swoop. Somehow I always played music for a living and managed to compose, learning by doing, no matter how crazy the job. In 1987 my late wife and I formed the New York new music presenting organisation ComposersCollaborative Inc, which continues to this day, as does my so-called career reviewing and booklet-note-writing that started in 1992. This year, my recitals have encompassed everything from John Cage's *Four Walls*

to the complete works of Thelonious Monk (all 70 songs in 90 minutes!).

When Picasso said, 'I do not seek, I find,' he essentially described my listening habits. For instance, I just learned about the French-Canadian traditional fiddler Isidore Soucy and downloaded his huge 78rpm discography. I reconnected with Duke Ellington's 1940 Fargo North Dakota dance concert; to my mind it's the first great American symphony. In Central Park my girlfriend and I soaked in Alvin Curran's gorgeous *Maritime Rites* for 80 brass players in rowboats. But I'm still wending my way through the complete Grateful Dead Europe '72 tour 73-disc box-set, released last year!

### Andrew Achenbach

Nalen Anthoni  
Mike Ashman  
Philip Clark  
Rob Cowan\*  
Jeremy Dibble  
Peter Dickinson  
**Jed Distler**  
Duncan Druce  
Adrian Edwards  
Richard Fairman  
David Fallows  
David Fanning  
Iain Fenlon  
Fabrice Fitch  
Jonathan

Freeman-Attwood  
Caroline Gill  
Edward Greenfield  
David Gutman  
Lindsay Kemp  
Philip Kennicott  
Tess Knighton  
Andrew Lamb  
Richard Lawrence  
Ivan March

### Ivan Moody

Bryce Morrison  
Jeremy Nicholas  
Christopher Nickol  
Geoffrey Norris  
Richard Osborne  
Stephen Plalstow  
Peter Quanttrill  
Guy Rickards  
Malcolm Riley  
Marc Rochester  
Julie Anne Sadie  
Edward Seckerson  
Pwll ap Siôn  
Harriet Smith  
Ken Smith  
David Patrick Stearns  
David Threasher  
David Vickers  
John Warrack  
Richard Whitehouse  
Arnold Whittall  
Richard Wigmore  
William Yeoman

\* Contributing Editor

# Recording of the Month



*'In Adès's *Lieux retrouvés*, the sheer panache of the final movement is as persuasive as the tonal refinement preceding it'*

*Arnold Whittall revels in a 'memory'-themed programme from Isserlis and Adès*

## 'Lieux retrouvés'

**Adès** *Lieux retrouvés*<sup>a</sup> **Fauré** Cello Sonata No 2, Op 117<sup>a</sup> **Janáček** *Pohádka* (Fairy Tale)<sup>a</sup> **Kurtág** For Steven: In memoriam Pauline Mara. Pilinszky János: Gérard de Nerval. Schatten. György Kroó in memoriam **Liszt** *Romance oubliée*, S132<sup>a</sup>. Die Zelle in Nonnenwerth, S382<sup>a</sup>. La lugubre gondola, S134<sup>a</sup> **Steven Isserlis** vc <sup>a</sup>**Thomas Adès** pf Hyperion © CDA67948 (77 • DDD)

This blissfully unhackneyed and brilliantly executed recital takes memory in all its facets as its theme, and the highlight is the first recording of Thomas Adès's own 2009 four-movement suite for cello and piano. Inspired by an instrument that, as the composer says in the booklet, is unrivalled in its ability to suggest a 'haunting sense of time and place', *Lieux retrouvés* steps aside from the relatively lush sonorities and expansive designs of such recent orchestral works as *Teotl* and *Polaris* to revisit the concentrated allusiveness and memorably disconcerting blend of the ironic and the nostalgic that distinguish some of his earlier chamber pieces.

Though entirely of our own time, Adès's music is never entirely alienated from the romantic regretfulness heard in the three pieces by Liszt with which the programme

begins: a song without words (*Romance oubliée* derives from a much earlier vocal piece) and a pair of miniature tone-poems, the second Liszt's evocation of the kind of funeral gondola that conveyed the corpse of his son-in-law Richard Wagner to the railway station in Venice for onward transmission to Germany and burial at Bayreuth in 1883.

Following Liszt with Janáček's three-movement 'fairy tale', written in 1910, then revised and finally published in 1924, underlines the changes that were taking place around the turn of the century as composers thought about how best to move with the times; how much to conserve and how much to innovate. In *Pohádka*, Janáček's constantly shifting perspectives combine with obsessive repetitiveness, and both aspects come across with maximum spontaneity and alertness in this performance.

The disc's most sustained celebration of musical tradition comes in Fauré's Second Cello Sonata, though its date – 1921 – reinforces the sense of a romanticism that seems almost despairing in its desire to recapture that world of uninhibited feeling that had been under sustained attack since

the 1890s and which, after the First World War, could only survive if it offered a plausible alternative to the abrasiveness of Stravinsky and his French supporters. Isserlis and Adès have the measure of the music's fervent lyricism, which means they avoid any temptation to exaggerate or underplay it. They also do justice to the more solemn qualities of the central *Andante*, a transcription of a *Chant funéraire* which Fauré had composed earlier in 1921 to mark the centenary of Napoleon's death. The framing movements, a sonata *Allegro* and a *scherzo*-like finale, contain strong contrasts without ever losing their essential momentum, and confirm that even in the 1920s musical classicism still had plenty of life left in it – at least when the contribution romanticism had made to extending its expressive range and formal flexibility was duly acknowledged.

After Fauré's expansiveness, the often sparse lines and ultimately evanescent economy of Kurtág's four miniatures, which range in date from 1984 to 2010, encapsulate the imaginativeness of this recital's probing juxtapositions and alignments. The first of the four is also the most recent, Kurtág's affecting tribute to



Intense and expressive: Adès and Isserlis, pictured here at the US premiere of *Lieux retrouvés* at Carnegie Hall

Steven Isserlis's late wife, Pauline Mara; and the sequence as a whole, with its brooding introspection, provides the perfect background to Adès's much more extrovert but no less intense blending of technical sophistication and expressive directness.

From what could easily be taken for Adès's very personal response to the fractal rhythmic processes found in Ligeti's piano studies, *Lieux retrouvés* evolves through a sequence of highly inventive textures. First, in 'Les eaux', the watery imagery begins to suggest itself mainly through the repetitive flowing patterns in the piano part, which counterpoint a sustained modal melody in the cello. But expansion and destabilisation are soon brought to bear, and with the tension comes the increasing energy evident when the cello first adopts the piano's regular flowing motion, then begins to diversify it both rhythmically and harmonically. In the final stages of the movement, the sustained cello melody returns but in a much higher register and set against a more 'spaced-out' accompaniment; the movement ends with an assertion of difference: a terse cello cadence, while the flowing piano part drains away in the instrument's lowest register.

The next movement, 'La montagne' (The Mountain), is marked *Tempo di Promenade* but the cello's initial steps are anything but regularly paced and the music evolves into intricate contrapuntal interactions that suggest two mountaineers struggling to maintain their equilibrium. It seems as if the climb will end in contemplation of a rarefied summit but a sudden chordal descent brings the duo down to earth with a vengeance (representing, says the booklet, 'the defiant planting of a flag', not a catastrophic fall!).

'Les champs' (The Fields) evokes wide-open spaces in a very different spirit, with gentle, arching lines that also gradually ascend to dizzy heights – and this time there is no final descent. Instead, it's left to the finale to depict 'La ville' (The Town) as the location for the sustained virtuosity of a 'Cancan macabre'. This is an abrasively sardonic yet exuberant parody of Offenbachian high jinks, more redolent of urban vulgarity than pastoral sublimity. The performance's sheer panache is as persuasive as the tonal refinement preceding it, and the recording throughout gives the players all the space and atmosphere they need to characterise the varied moods and textures of an unusually rewarding programme. **G**

## Listening points

Your guide to the disc's memorable moments

### Track 3: Liszt – *La lugubre gondola*/ Track 13: Kurtág – György Króó in memoriam

Two economical laments for musicians by Hungarian composers from more than a century apart. In the Liszt, the cello echoes the piano's initial cry of pain. In the Kurtág, the cello is heard unaccompanied, barely audible, gradually building an intensely expressive solo line.

### Track 5: Janáček – *Pohádka*, 2nd movt, from 1'43"

Isserlis's seamless transition from *pizzicato* to *arco*, and both players' rapid rise to a climax, encapsulate Janáček's febrile approach to musical storytelling.

### Track 9: Fauré – *Sonata No 2*, 3rd movt, from 0'52"

The sudden contrast underlines the players' alertness to Fauré's expressive nuances. The mood changes but the flow is sustained.

### Track 14: Adès – *Lieux retrouvés*, 'Les eaux', from 1'25"

The two distinct textures converge, only for harmonic and rhythmic intensification to increase, building towards the movement's most substantial climax.

### Track 17: Adès – *Lieux retrouvés*, 'La ville', from 0'24"

After the fractured start, Offenbach-like rhythms and un-Offenbach-like harmonies and spacings begin to emerge.

# Orchestral



## Geoffrey Norris on MacMillan concertos from Amsterdam:

*'The orchestra paints an unnerving backdrop of darkness and flickers of light'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 70**



## Edward Seckerson reviews Baibe Skride's concerto exploration:

*'Skride is an ethereal presence throughout, weaving her spells through the subtlest Ravelian textures'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 72**

## Arnold • E Bernstein • Daugherty

**Arnold** Guitar Concerto, Op 67 **E Bernstein**

Guitar Concerto **Daugherty** Gee's Bend<sup>a</sup>

**Thorsten Drücker** *gtr*<sup>a</sup>/*elec gtr*

**WDR Radio Orchestra, Cologne / Rasmus Baumann**

Querstand © VKJK1211 (73' • DDD)



### Guitar concertos straddling the Atlantic from German Drücker

Even if you're not a fan of David Chesky's Concerto for electric guitar and orchestra or Yngwie Malmsteen's Concerto Suite for electric guitar and orchestra, chances are you'll fully dig this electrifying world premiere recording of American composer Michael Daugherty's attractive and moving *Gee's Bend* (2009). The eponymous Alabama River community is known for the vibrant colours and jumping geometry of its quilts (one is pictured on the CD cover) – qualities Daugherty has captured in his own four-movement 'musical quilt' woven from blues, rock, spiritual and contemporary classical music material. But *Gee's Bend*, which finds its ideal advocates in the ear-bending German multi-instrumentalist Thorsten Drücker and the superb Cologne WDR Radio Orchestra under Rasmus Baumann, is no mere pastiche.

From the Hendrixesque 'Housetop', with its dazzling cadenza, through the gently rippling arpeggios and pentatonic figurations of 'Grandmother's Dream' and the bluesy, *concertante*-like 'Washboard' to the raucous high energy of 'Chicken Pickin'', Daugherty skilfully blends rigorous Apollonian compositional technique with the Dionysian world of riff and distortion pedal to create a unique and worthy homage to the talented slave-descendant quilt-makers of Gee's Bend.

At first I couldn't see the connections between this work and film composer Elmer Bernstein's occasionally cheesy yet superbly crafted and often inspired Guitar Concerto or Malcolm Arnold's brilliant Guitar Concerto, Op 67. Then I began to hear them: the energy of the dance; the drawing on popular and folk music idioms; the unashamed yet highly inventive use of traditional harmony. An unusual and impressive release. **William Yeoman**

## Beethoven

Symphonies – No 5, Op 67<sup>a</sup>; No 6, 'Pastoral', Op 68<sup>b</sup>

**SWR Symphony Orchestra, Baden-Baden and**

**Freiburg / Sylvain Cambreling**

Glor © GC11461 (71' • DDD)

Recorded live, <sup>a</sup>November 29, 2003;

<sup>b</sup>January 23-24, 2007



### Beethoven from Cambreling, the new music maestro

Sylvain Cambreling is most often namechecked in *Gramophone*, at least by me, for his recordings of Salvatore Sciarrino, Morton Feldman, Beat Furrer, Gérard Grisey et al – each composer a modern master with his own hard-fought-for tactile relationship to the fabric of sound. I'd hoped Cambreling's Beethoven might tap into the same vein: the material core of Beethoven's Fifth and *Pastoral* Symphonies revealed without distraction. But that's not what I heard.

Part of the problem isn't Cambreling's fault. The Fifth was recorded live in 2003 but I wonder on what exactly. Although the overall sound fared better on my expensive headphones than my speakers, instruments bleed into each other and the pinched bandwidth can't hack Beethoven's piccolo part. Any dynamic level above *forte* – and this symphony is jam-packed with them – provokes sonic meltdown. The Sixth, cut in 2007, is much improved but is perched on the crude side of acceptable still.

Cambreling's pacy tempi are modern chic – think Chailly and Krivine, not Barenboim and Thielemann – but this Fifth sounds hurried rather than driven. Interpretative inconsistencies abound: why is the first climactic chord of the *Andante* second movement whacked *reductio ad absurdum*? Why are the closing pages so self-consciously overblown? Your guess is as good as mine. There were moments in the *Pastoral* when all was forgiven: the SWR SO's bassoonist steals the show with his/her gambol around Beethoven's frisky chromatics. But the thunderstorm sequence finds Cambreling over-emoting again: thumping timpani, everything pushed to the point of hysteria without any expressive gain. A perplexing disappointment.

**Philip Clark**

## Beethoven

Symphony No 9, 'Choral'

**Annemarie Kremer** *sop* Wilke te Brummelstroete

*contr* Marcel Reijmans *ten* Geert Smits *bar*

**Consensus Vocalis; Netherlands Symphony**

**Orchestra / Jan Willem de Vriend**

Challenge Classics © CC72533 (63' • DDD/DSD)

## Beethoven • Miki • Thiele

**Beethoven** Symphony No 9, 'Choral'<sup>a</sup>

**Miki** Symphony for Two Worlds<sup>b</sup>

**Thiele** Gesänge an die Sonne<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Edda Moser *sop* <sup>ac</sup>Rosemarie Lang *mez* <sup>ac</sup>Peter Schreier *ten* <sup>a</sup>Theo Adam *bass* <sup>c</sup>Matthias Eisenberg *org*

<sup>b</sup>Pro Musica Nipponia; Leipzig Gewandhaus

**Children's Choir; Leipzig Radio Choir; Leipzig**

**Gewandhaus** <sup>ac</sup>Choir and Orchestra / Kurt Masur

Berlin Classics © ② 0300439BC (131' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Gewandhaus, Leipzig,

October 8, 1981



### Beethoven's Ninth from Holland and from the new Gewandhaus's opening concert

*Res severa gaudium* ('pleasure is a serious business'), the proscenium of the Gewandhaus stage sternly enjoins us; and, after the postmodern roisterings of Barenboim and Thielemann, it's a considerable relief to turn to interpreters who respond first of all to the text in front of them. You could, if you wanted, discern in the motoric drive of de Vriend's *Scherzo* the Welsh steam engine to which he refers in his decidedly personal take on the symphony's context in the booklet-notes, but what one actually hears is a symphony composed in 1824 and not 1884; composed by a man used to dashing off arrangements of popular tunes but now embarking on a series of string quartets that would sum up and extend a life's work. The adroit members of the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra adapt themselves accordingly: to horns that parp and bustle, closer to the earth than Gardiner, say, but without the blaring insensitivity of Emmanuel Krivine's band. The intimately textured, carefully staged, unfailingly sung effect of the whole is close to the reading we

might have had if Sir Charles Mackerras had retained the Scottish Chamber Orchestra for his otherwise era-defining set of the symphonies and anyone for whom *Werktreue* still means something valuable and self-renewing should hear it. The difference between de Vriend and Masur is encapsulated by 'O Freunde, nicht diese Töne!'; what Theo Adam delivers with hall-filling pomposity, Geert Smits makes into an operatic scena, at first dramatically contemptuous, then persuasive and, finally, firmly exhortative.

By the side of de Vriend, Masur's live performance, though nourished by a culture of fidelity, seems sometimes fussy, sometimes clumsy and altogether less true. Masur has his personal touches, such as a huge timpani *crescendo* to set the seal on the first movement, a *diminuendo* on the timpani irruptions of the *Scherzo*'s B section and an insistence on using a children's chorus for the top line of the finale; these have palled on me after a while. The most exciting of Masur's four available versions of the Ninth, it has been released several times and is now coupled with the original commission for the opening of the new Gewandhaus on October 8, 1981, from local composer Siegfried Thiele. Does its *omnium gatherum* of styles stand the test of time better than the more obvious culture clash of Japanese and European instruments in Minoru Miki's *Symphony for Two Worlds*, and does either produce more than a politically attractive *pièce d'occasion*? I'm not convinced. But don't miss de Vriend.

Peter Quantrill

## Berlioz

Symphonie fantastique, Op 14  
Orchestre de la Francophonie /  
Jean-Philippe Tremblay  
Analekta © AN2 9998 (54' • DDD)



### Canada's French-speaking orchestra plays the Fantastique

Another month, another Berlioz *Symphonie fantastique*. No sooner have the Orchestre National de Lyon and Leonard Slatkin released their version on Naxos than the Orchestre de la Francophonie and Jean-Philippe Tremblay produce theirs on Analekta. As the label might indicate, the orchestra is Canadian, based in Quebec, and it identifies itself as 'an important stepping stone for young Canadian musicians embarking on a professional career'. The playing is polished, the recording likewise, and there are so many advantages over the ONL's Naxos disc as to put it in another league altogether.

Whereas Slatkin's interpretation was notable for its efficient direction rather than its dramatic lighting, Tremblay's has a real sense

of theatrical scenography as well as lucidity of texture and an impressive awareness of the spectrum of Berlioz's instrumental timbres. If the second-movement waltz can at times seem a little measured, a touch cautious in the way it approaches the *ritenuto* and the music's suppleness, there is nevertheless a good underlying pulse that gathers pace excitingly towards the end. The 'Scène aux champs' is hauntingly atmospheric, with an affecting air of loneliness, despondency and yearning. The playing explodes with radiant anguish when appropriate but, as in the performance as a whole, the music's perspective is never distorted. Rather, there is a firm sense of emotional flux, with proper foreboding in the 'Marche au supplice' and a spine-tingling urgency and propulsion in the 'Songe d'une nuit de sabbat'. Altogether this is a performance in which Berlioz's challenges are well met.

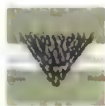
Geoffrey Norris

Selected comparison:

Lions Nat Orch, Slatkin (10/12) (NAXO) 8 572886

## Brahms

Symphonies - No 2, Op 73; No 3, Op 90  
Aachen Symphony Orchestra / Marcus Bosch  
Coviello © COV31206 (69' • DDD/DSD)  
Recorded live



### Bosch follows Aachen Bruckner cycle with Brahms

Though not wishing to start on a downer, just sample the last minute or so of the Third Symphony in this rather perfunctory performance under Marcus Bosch, then turn to, say, Nikolaus Harnoncourt with the Berlin Philharmonic in the same passage, and Harnoncourt's superiority strikes the ear almost immediately. Under Harnoncourt the music's gently descending lines truly glow, distinctively but never conspicuously, and the gradual 'dying away' is beautifully handled. Bosch dismisses the page with barely a shrug and that goes for much else on the disc.

On the other hand, the Second Symphony starts promisingly, the timpanist using hard sticks, the general pace well chosen. But take Karl Böhm's DG recording with the Vienna Philharmonic off the shelf and you soon realise what Bosch is missing: primarily a sense of scale and mystery. Böhm's elasticity of phrasing and expansively drawn climaxes place him in a quite different league, not to mention the superiority of his orchestra (though the Aachen players are often fairly on the ball). A shame really, because Bosch's Bruckner (same label) is refreshingly unmannered; but interpretative specifics that benefit Bruckner don't necessarily benefit Brahms and there's too much in both symphonies that comes across as matter-of-fact, unaffectionate and comparatively cavalier.

## GRAMOPHONE *Archive*

### Beethoven's Ninth Symphony

As two 'Chorals' are issued, a look at our 1935 review of Stokowski's Philadelphia recording



JUNE 1935

Beethoven Symphony No 9, 'Choral'  
Philadelphia Orchestra /

Leopold Stokowski

HMV DB2327/35 (12in, 54s)

The second movement is a *Scherzo* such as only a giant could have written. The steadiness makes the pace all the more telling: there is a sense of enormous energy, not all displayed at once. The vagueness of the work's opening, as to key, is for a moment paralleled by that of the *Scherzo*, until the drum establishes D minor (with a touch of the overtone third in the first note). The clarity of detail impresses me, and the ease of the progress; the music is so inherently strong that any attempt to push it on or throw it about would ruin it. Side 6 brings the Trio, with a particularly rich bit of woodwind, and the daintiest nods and becks and wreathed smiles of all concerned. I could not wish a happier recording of this most genial notion of Beethoven's. The three sides (5-7) of this movement constitute a delightful possession, an epitome of the composer's maturest powers: something well worth much study, in the light of the slow history of the symphonic second movement, and of Beethoven's greatest attribute - that of 'liberator'.

With the third movement we are on more debatable ground. Greatness still, but - flawed? The *Adagio* is deep, but I wonder, with others, whether it expresses today what it meant to the composer and his age? We must allow something for the variation through the years of the sense of pathos. I much dislike the deadly slow pace adopted at the start. I would not insist too much on Beethoven's own indication of the speed, but this dreadfully slow-motion effect drags the tune out of all comfort, and weakens it badly. It cannot stand much of that. The D major (and later G major) tune is happy enough, in this respect, but the rhythm is not well established.

Everything about this gracious movement ought to be firm yet easy. This second tune does not play a strong enough part in the music; nothing happens to it, and I cannot feel that it is quite fit to match the opening theme. The orchestra gives it all the meaning it can bear, which is not very much, but I cannot help feeling that there is here a slight sense of *effort*, as if the conductor wanted to do something with the theme: but the composer was the man to do that, and he decided not to.

The movement always feels lop-sided: I feel that some blind spot in Beethoven allowed him to leave the tune thus, undeveloped, not quite standing up to the first's emotion, and not sufficiently free from it to be an obviously intended 'relief'. Try as one will, through all the years of hearing, the thing cannot quite be brought off: and it is not the conductor's fault. Alec Robertson

Read article in full at the Gramophone Archive:  
[gramophone.co.uk](http://gramophone.co.uk)



Neither religious nor technocratic: Herbert Blomstedt's Bruckner in Leipzig

Spirited routine – and that's the most I can manage, I'm afraid, aside from some justified praise for generally good sound. **Rob Cowan**

*Sym No 2 – selected comparison:*

VPO, Böhm (DG) 474 989-2GM

*Sym No 3 – selected comparison:*

BPO, Harnoncourt (11/97) (TELD) 0630 13136-2

## Bruckner

Symphony No 4, 'Romantic'

(1878/80 version, ed Nowak 1953)

Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra / Herbert Blomstedt

Querstand © VKJK1018 (67' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live, October 7-8, 2010



### Blomstedt returns to the 'Romantic' in Leipzig

I am aware that many listeners sense an indefinable humanity in the great conducting of the past that simply isn't available to us in the modern age and I responded more warmly than did Robert Cowan to Bernard Haitink's patient traversal of Bruckner's *Romantic*. I suspect that RC might have preferred the more propulsive approach of another octogenarian who carries the flag for the Austro-German tradition in the latest instalment of what should be the first complete Bruckner cycle in surround sound. That said,

the auditory advantages of being immersed in a warm bath of Brucknerian sonority are offset somewhat by the dryness of Leipzig's modern hall and the relatively lean profile of its orchestra's strings (with first and second violins antiphonally placed).

As a child in Stockholm, Herbert Blomstedt was introduced to Bruckner when Wilhelm Furtwängler, no less, directed a performance of the Seventh to general bewilderment. The ghost of that maestro's flexibility survives in his own readings, albeit with a steadier controlling hand, much less in the way of expressive intensity and, of course, cleaner texts.

Like Haitink, Blomstedt has been a serial returnee to the Fourth, speeding up rather than slowing down with the passage of the years. A Dresden account, originally issued on the Denon label and now available from Dal Segno, is the most mellow and least polished. The San Francisco version (Decca, 7/95) would seem to have vanished from the lists.

Blomstedt is now using the Nowak edition and recording live with the ensemble of which he was music director between 1998 and 2005. The biggest contrast with Haitink comes in his pacing of the opening movement, which is fleetier and relatively unsettled. The winds sound a little vexed at the start, as if taken aback by the tempo,

although the horn quickly settles down to produce the expected liquid tones. The orchestral playing is mostly very fine. With its generally airy textures, Blomstedt's Bruckner is neither religious nor merely technocratic and will not spoil you for grander, more subjective interpretations. It is, however, a little plainer than some will like. The concluding applause is retained and not separately tracked, the packaging elegant.

**David Gutman**

*Selected comparisons:*

Staatskapelle Dresden, Blomstedt (2/85\*) (DAL) DSPRCD045

LSO, Haitink (2/12) (LSO) LSO0716

## Bruckner

Symphony No 4, 'Romantic'

Munich Philharmonic Orchestra / Sergiu Celibidache

Video director **Klaus Lindemann**

ArtHaus Musik © 2010 101 645

(82' + 30' • NTSC • 4:3 • DD 5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live at the Herkulessaal, Munich, 1983

Special feature: Interview with Sergiu Celibidache

## Bruckner

Symphony No 7\*

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra / Sergiu Celibidache

Video director **Rodney Greenberg**

EuroArts © 2010 201 1408; © 201 1404

(90' + 54' • NTSC • 16:9/4:3 • PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live at the Schauspielhaus, Berlin, March 31 & April 1, 1992

Includes rehearsal footage, interviews with orchestra members and documentary: 'The Triumphant Return', directed by Wolfgang Becker<sup>b</sup>



### Separated by a decade, two Bruckner symphonies from Celibidache on DVD

An initial session with these performances confirms that among the most striking aspects of Sergiu Celibidache's Bruckner is its tendency towards extreme breadth; but, as the conductor himself suggests in an interview featured alongside the Fourth Symphony, other considerations are of equal if not more importance. The apparent upshot of his quoted philosophy (if you can find it tucked in among his many winding abstractions) is that music, for him, is a form of freedom, of liberation. The videoed evidence is impressive: take a glance at his ecstatic facial expressions during the sensitively phrased Trio of the Fourth Symphony's *Scherzo* and you do indeed gain the impression of someone enjoying a profound sense of inner freedom. Tempo-wise, this performance of the Fourth is fairly close to the one that EMI issued as part of their Munich Philharmonic/Celibidache series (there's barely a minute between the two) and features a similarly imposing coda, which is built, step by step, as if on a sort of Giant's Causeway that rises to a colossal peak. This is Celibidache on a roll and the interview material is at the very least interesting.

ArtHaus Musik's sound quality is variable, certainly less consistently good than EuroArts offers for the 1992 Berlin Philharmonic Seventh that marked the conductor's return to an orchestra that 38 years earlier found him on the crest of a wave that was soon to fall so that an even bigger wave, bearing the formidable and eminently marketable Herbert von Karajan, could take its place. From 1945 to 1952 Celibidache was the BPO's principal conductor, even though Wilhelm Furtwängler continued to appear in many post-war concerts. Early footage on an accompanying documentary (that also includes 1992 rehearsal sequences) shows a lean, handsome Young Turk with jet-black curly hair diving furiously into Beethoven, whereas the Schauspielhaus Bruckner concert features an equally charismatic but utterly transformed Celibidache, portly and patient, with a mass of thick silver hair and a tendency to paradoxical pontificating that resembles the Taoist masters at their most abstruse. I was fascinated to note that, although with Celibidache's Bruckner it's usually a case of 'the later the performance, the slower the tempo', on the Munich Bruckner Seventh from two years later that EMI put out

on CD the tempo is actually swifter than this Berlin version by around seven minutes.

The problem with the Berlin Philharmonic Seventh is that, for all its monumentality (for example, the first movement's coda and the *Adagio*'s percussion-capped climax), the procession of phrases is so terribly slow, wilfully so at times, that you wonder whether Celibidache was out to prove a point, making up for lost time with an orchestra which some would say should have been his inheritance. At around 86 minutes, no recorded performance, past or present, is slower and none that I know of feels more static, though the last two movements are less extreme. It's almost as if Celibidache is posing as a sort of Brucknerian Glenn Gould. The EMI CD version offers what is essentially the same interpretative viewpoint but without the level of excess that relegates this extraordinary Berlin performance to the level of a historically significant curio.

**Rob Cowan**

*Sym No 7 – selected comparison:*

*Munich PO, Celibidache (EMI) 556695-2*

### Chopin • Noskowski

**Chopin Piano Concerto No 2, Op 21<sup>a</sup>**

**Noskowski The Steppe, Op 66**

<sup>a</sup>**Alexander Lonquich** *pf*

**Champs-Élysées Orchestra / Philippe Herreweghe**

Fryderyk Chopin Institute © NIFCCD031 (52' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Witold Lutosławski Concert Hall of Polish Radio, Warsaw, August 18, 2011



### Lonquich chooses an Erard for Chopin's Second Concerto

Little known outside Poland, Zygmunt Noskowski (1846-1909) was an important figure in the musical life of his country, a conductor, composer, administrator and teacher of a whole post-Chopin generation of Polish musicians, among them Karol Szymanowski. His symphonic poem *The Steppe*, composed in 1896, was inspired by Henryk Sienkiewicz's novel *With Fire and Sword* about the 17th-century battles between Poles and Ukrainian Cossacks. It's a most effective piece with strong themes and ideas, closer in its airy orchestral textures to Smetana than Tchaikovsky, lasts 18'34" and well merits a place in concert halls outside Poland.

'When I am not in the mood, I play on the Erard piano, where I find the ready tone easily,' wrote Chopin. 'But when I am full of vigour and strong enough to find my very own tone – I need a Pleyel piano.' Alexander Lonquich is not the first to record the F minor Concerto on an (1849) Erard. Among others is Emanuel Ax, whose graceful account on an 1851 Erard with Sir Charles Mackerras dates from 1998. The sound is a mellow amalgam of fortepiano and modern grand. It makes a persuasive case against those who criticise Chopin's

orchestration, for here it seems ideally integrated with the score's spare string and woodwind textures. Longquich's is a beautifully considered reading, the faster decay of the piano sound and Philippe Herreweghe's light touch revealing forgotten colours and nuances at every turn: the central *Larghetto* is outstanding, with the finale generating no little excitement. The only downside is the disc's somewhat meagre running time of 51'50".

**Jeremy Nicholas**

*Chopin – selected comparison:*

*Ax, OAE, Mackerras (6/98) (SONY) SK63371*

### Debussy

**Préludes (orch Peter Breiner)**

**Royal Scottish National Orchestra / Jun Märkl**

Naxos © 8 572584 (77' • DDD)



### Märkl tries new orchestrations of Debussy's piano Préludes

Now here's a strange thing: Colin Matthews's orchestrations of the two books of piano *Préludes* are already included on the seventh and eighth discs of Naxos's justly praised nine-CD Debussy box-set from the Orchestre National de Lyon under Jun Märkl, performances that have keen competition from the Hallé on their own label under Sir Mark Elder (it was the Hallé that asked Matthews to undertake the transcriptions in the first place). On this new disc, however, Märkl shifts to the Royal Scottish National Orchestra to conduct the *Préludes* in different orchestral guises by Peter Breiner, a Slovak-born composer and arranger now resident in New York. Much more so than in the Matthews versions, these Breiner ones raise the knotty question of why Debussy's *Préludes* need to be orchestrated at all. Their fascination surely lies in the way that Debussy liberated the piano's expressive and colouristic potential to create images of phenomenal finesse and evocative subtlety.

Matthews harnessed his own creative imagination in rethinking the *Préludes* in terms of the orchestra, so that they often bear his own personal stamp. His embellishments, his new inflections and his fresh visions add something that is intriguing and ear-catching in itself. Breiner's are much more straightforward, sometimes dressed in colours that Debussy would have recognised, sometimes not. The impression is of a job professionally done and of performances that do what they have to do and do it well. They do not, however, extinguish the temptation to go back and relish Debussy's piano originals. **Geoffrey Norris**

### FX Dussek

**Sinfonias – Altnér A3; Altnér Bb2; Altnér Bb3; Altnér G4**

**Helsinki Baroque Orchestra / Aapo Häkkinen**

Naxos © 8 572683 (54' • DDD)

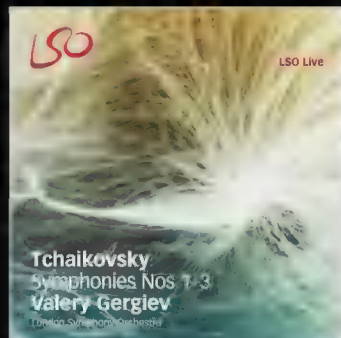
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### ALBUMBLATT in A minor, Opus posth. (1853)

Johannes  
Brahms





Northern promise: the Helsinki Baroque Orchestra do Dussek full justice



### Häkkinen explores Dussek's moods with Helsinki Baroque

Small ensemble, 18-strong, big music-making; modest scoring – strings with pairs of oboes and horns – but a wide-ranging imagination from Franz Xaver Dussek (1731-99), all topped by wide-ranging musicianship from Aapo Häkkinen. Sensibly he adds a bassoon to reinforce the bass; and, unlike Helios 18 in Naxos's first disc of Dussek symphonies, he avoids the mistake of including an obtrusive harpsichord continuo. Häkkinen directs from a fortepiano, appropriately so. He uses it to decorate lines and enhance tonal colour, eschewing the infuriating anachronism of emphasising harmonic rhythm.

The instrument is a presence, never an irritant. And the brass parts are a reminder that an ancestor of Dussek's patron, Count Johann Spork, introduced the French horn to Bohemia in 1681. Within a century her players were among the elite. So are all members of Helsinki Baroque, and fully responsive to every requirement. Look out for the bassoon's contribution to the *Largo maestoso* introduction of Altner A3, which leads into a supple *Allegro*. Häkkinen is as much in control of phrase and contour at this speed as he is in the slow

movement, fetchingly fashioning the music with pithy embellishments from the keyboard.

The marking is *Andante*, as it is for every similar movement, including the most affective one – exclusively for strings – in the only four-movement symphony, Altner Bb3. Häkkinen, beguiled by its spell, inspires his musicians into a softly atmospheric evocation of pastoral spaciousness interspersed with shadows of gentle agitation. Excellent. **Nalen Anthoni**

### Dvořák

Cello Concerto, Op 104 B191<sup>a</sup>.

Symphony No 9, 'From the New World', Op 95 B178

<sup>a</sup>Mario Brunello vc Santa Cecilia Academy Orchestra,

Rome / Antonio Pappano

EMI Ⓢ ② 914102-2 (87' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Sala Santa Cecilia, Rome,

January 2012



### Pappano with fruits of last issue's Session Report

This was my first encounter with the Italian cellist Mario Brunello. A pupil of Antonio Janigro and joint winner of the 1986 International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, he plays with great spirit and no little poetry; and, if he is not the most commandingly articulate, tonally seductive or full-throated

protagonist of Dvořák's masterly concerto you'll ever hear, he generates a personable rapport with Sir Antonio Pappano. Few would claim that the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia is in the front rank but it responds with endearing eagerness here for its music director, who also manages to quarry plenty of stimulating detail from Dvořák's exquisitely tailored orchestral canvas. Does the first movement's second subject swoon a mite too indulgently? I think so. Long-standing allegiances to such luminaries as Rostropovich (with Talich and Boult), Fournier (with Kubelík and Szell) and Navarra (with František Stupka and Rudolf Schwarz) remain unchallenged but it's easy to like a performance whose heart is always in the right place; indeed, those sublimely wistful reminiscences towards the work's close are genuinely touching.

The account of the *New World* boasts comparable virtues, being abundantly characterful, pliable and consistently involving. Pappano possesses the happy knack of moulding a phrase to make it sound newly minted and he also sees to it that the melodies float and textures glow. On the debit side, his band is not in the luxury class, there are rather more coughs from the auditorium than is desirable and the finale's effortlessly resourceful parade of earlier themes isn't quite marshalled



# Zarebski

Piano Quintet Op. 34

**ARGERICH**

NIZIOŁ SZYMCZEWSKA  
CHEN NEUSTROEV

DVD  
VIDEO

MARTHA ARGERICH ~ piano  
BARTŁOMIEJ NIZIOŁ ~ first violin  
AGATA SZYMCZEWSKA ~ second violin  
LYDA CHEN ~ viola  
ALEXANDER NEUSTROEV ~ cello

[NIFCDVD-002]

JULIUSZ ZAREBSKI [1854–1885]: Piano Quintet in G minor, Op. 34  
Recorded live in Warsaw at the 7th International Music Festival Chopin And His Europe

[www.chopin.nifc.pl](http://www.chopin.nifc.pl)

with the clinching inevitability that marks out, say, Karel Ančerl's magnificent 1961 recording. I have a lot of time for Pappano – his readings are invariably engaging and supremely watchful – but ultimately this *New World* falls some distance short of the exalted standard of the already-mentioned Ančerl, let alone the great Rafael Kubelík's wondrously subtle, vernally fresh and extraordinarily powerful broadcast performance from June 1980 with the Bavarian RSO. **Andrew Achenbach**

*New World Sym* – selected comparisons:

Czech PO, Ančerl (SUPR) SU3662-2

Bavarian Rad SO, Kubelík (ORFE) C596 031B

## Fasch

'Orchestral Works, Vol 3'

Ouvertures – FWV K:D2; FWV K:F1.

Concertos – for Recorder, FWV L:Fdeest<sup>a</sup>;

for Lute, FWV L:d1<sup>b</sup>; FWV L:D8; FWV L:F3

**Tempesta di Mare / Gwyn Roberts** <sup>a</sup>rec

**Richard Stone** <sup>b</sup>lute

Chandos Chaconne © CHAN0791 (66' • DDD)



### More 'first' Fasch from Philadelphia Baroque players

A friend of Telemann and enthusiast for Vivaldi whose own music was admired by Bach, Johann Friedrich Fasch (1688-1758) has experienced a modest revival of fortunes. None of his music was printed in his lifetime but a slow trickle of enjoyable recordings of his orchestral overtures and concertos has revealed a craftsman of considerable talent and imagination. The third volume devoted to Fasch by Philadelphia's hard-working Tempesta di Mare orchestra contains premiere recordings of several works; apparently only the lute and flute concertos have been recorded before.

The programme commences splendidly with an Overture in D major (FWV K:D2) featuring two braying horns, three bold trumpets and thunderous timpani playing with (and against) woodwinds and strings. Co-director Gwyn Roberts takes the spotlight in an amiable recorder concerto until recently miscatalogued in New York Public Library under the name 'Rasch'; her *cantabile* playing is supported by gently murmuring strings in the concluding *Allegro*. Most of the time F major and D major *galant* music abounds and that's no bad thing when Tempesta di Mare's performances are thoughtfully convivial from start to finish. There are plenty of surprising twists and inventions in deceptively clever slow movements and personable quick movements (the charming dialogue between pairs of flutes and oboes in the first movement of FWV L:D8). The penultimate work showcased here is a welcome change of tonality and sonority for the Lute Concerto in D minor, featuring rippling solos from co-director Richard Stone. **David Vickers**

## Fribbins

'The Moving Finger Writes'

String Quartet No 2, 'After Cromer'<sup>a</sup>. A Haydn

Prelude<sup>b</sup>. Piano Concerto<sup>c</sup>. Two Fantasias<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>**Sarah-Jane Bradley** vs <sup>c</sup>**Diana Brekalo**,

<sup>b</sup>**Anthony Hewitt** <sup>d</sup>**Chilingirian Quartet**;

<sup>c</sup>**Royal Philharmonic Orchestra / Robertas Šervenikas**

Guild © GMCD7381 (65' • DDD)

<sup>c</sup>Recorded live at Cadogan Hall, London, 2011



### Premiere performances of a modern melodic master

Born in 1969, Peter Fribbins is a composer very much in the tradition of Britten and Tippett, unafraid to write melodically and tonally in thoughtful, well-wrought works. This Guild disc brings together four of his works recorded from different sources in excellent sound.

Most important is the Piano Concerto, written for the Croatian soloist, Diana Brekalo. It was recorded live at its first performance in 2011 at Cadogan Hall in London, an account with next to no interruptions from the audience until the applause at the end. The opening *Adagio*, made ominous with loud timpani strokes, leads to an *Allegro* in which a viola melody is constantly varied. It matters little that one hardly registers that motif, for the tautness of structure is perfectly evident. The slow movement is more straightforwardly melodic, with an oboe melody taken up by the piano. In the finale, after a rushing first theme, the oboe introduces a second subject, leading to a movement with plentiful timpani strokes and a slow central section before a final fugato and an exciting coda. Splendid performances from Brekalo and the RPO under the Croatian conductor Robertas Šervenikas.

The title, *After Cromer*, of the Second String Quartet does not refer to the place but to the hymn tune, which forms the basis of the powerful first movement: the Chilingirian Quartet, for whom it was written, are the persuasive advocates. After a brilliant *scherzo*, the slow movement is a reworking of one of Fribbins's organ pieces with a *pizzicato* central section. The finale also brings some *pizzicato* writing with double-stopping reminiscent of Bartók, leading to an energetic conclusion.

A Haydn Prelude was written as a tribute to John McCabe on his 70th birthday, reflecting his monumental recording of the complete Haydn piano sonatas. The Two Fantasias for viola and piano feature deep meditations for the viola, the first based on a Welsh folk tune, the second on a Hungarian melody, with the piano weaving an often elaborate accompaniment. Superb performances from the dedicated Sarah-Jane Bradley and Anthony Hewitt, who also plays the solo piano piece. Altogether an illuminating portrait of a composer who deserves to be even better known.

**Edward Greenfield**



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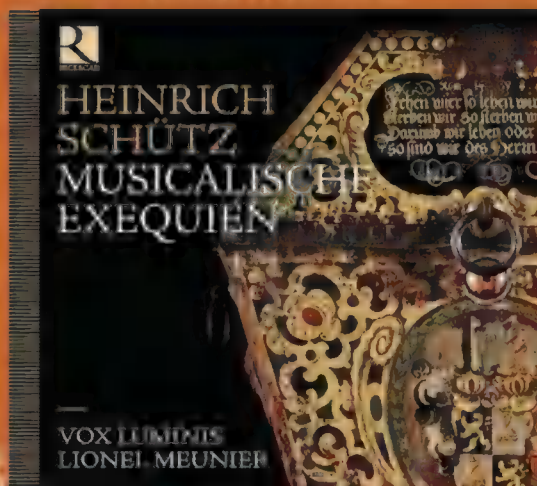


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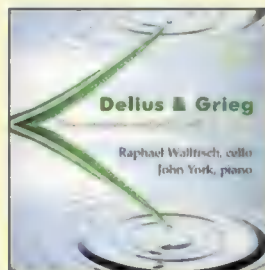
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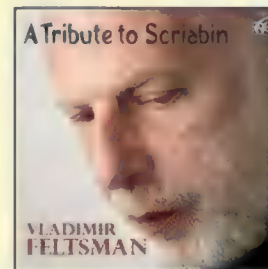
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## Górecki

Kleines Requiem für eine Polka, Op 66<sup>a</sup>.

Concert-Cantata, Op 65<sup>b</sup>. Harpsichord Concerto, Op 40<sup>c</sup>. Three Dances, Op 34

<sup>b</sup>Carol Wincenc fl <sup>a</sup>Anna Górecka pf

Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra / Antoni Wit

Naxos © 8 572872 (70' • DDD)



### Warsaw Philharmonic explore the other side of Górecki

Henryk Górecki's music started to receive international recognition only during the early 1990s, when he was already well into his 50s. The two main works featured on this disc date from around this time and typically play on the notion of contrasts between quiet/tender and loud/aggressive moments.

Such contrasts are often achieved dramatically in the *Little Requiem for a Certain Polka*, for piano and 13 instruments (1993), whose ostensibly tranquil first movement gives way at times to almost violent outbursts. The *Little Requiem*'s sharp edges are smoothed out in the *Concerto-Cantata* for flute and orchestra (1992), which receives its world premiere recording on this disc. As suggested by its title, the work attempts to map the religious elements of the cantata on to a concerto design. It's an interesting combination but the overall structure of the work is rather unbalanced. Soloist Carol Wincenc's deeply resonant sound is effective, however.

The other two works on this disc are less representative of Górecki's personal, spiritually imbued style. The much earlier, rhythmically propulsive *Three Dances* (1973) wears its Stravinskian colours on its sleeve; but the combative, capricious Harpsichord Concerto presents a far more individual take on neo-classicism. Over practically before it gets going, the work's dark, spiky neo-tonality is brought into even sharper focus in this version for piano and orchestra, despatched with almost clinical efficiency by soloist Anna Górecka. The latter two works show a side to Górecki that has often been forgotten since the success of the Third Symphony but is still to be found in his later works – open, eclectic, witty and ironic.

Pwyll ap Siôn

## Hayden

system/error<sup>a</sup>. presence/absence<sup>b</sup>. misguided<sup>c</sup>. Die Modularitäten<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Trio EKL; <sup>b</sup>ensemble mosaik / Enno Poppe;

<sup>c</sup>ELISION / Eugene Ughetti

NMC © NMCD168 (72' • DDD)

<sup>a</sup>Recorded live at <sup>a</sup>The Warehouse, London SE1,

November 22, 2007; <sup>c</sup>Iwaki Auditorium, ABC

Southbank; Melbourne, March 26, 2011



### NMC presents recorded debut for provocative voice Hayden

As if mindful of the reception nowadays accorded the more radical of today's music, Björn Heller bases his booklet-note on the word 'serious', which itself fairly sums up Sam Hayden's output. This first disc devoted to his music comprises four works from just over a decade and confirms his prowess as a writer of intricate, often oblique and always provocative music, which is made more so through the tension between the systematic and the spontaneous in his thinking.

The earliest piece, *presence/absence* (2000), has an appreciable grasp of the way that continuity can be heightened during the transition from the static to the disruptive; this latter quality being to the fore throughout *misguided* (2011), with its almost playfully aggressive take on overtly modernist gestures. Even more visceral, *system/error* (2003) pits flute, violin and percussion in a three-way dialogue whose occasional moments of coordination are more unsettling than the prevailing antagonism, whereas *Die Modularitäten* (2007) outlines a more methodical trajectory in the way in which sub-groups from the ensemble are linked by ethereal transitions and framed by *tutti* passages where a fractious coming-together is made manifest. Listeners can download a further piece, *schismatics* (2007), whose combining of electric violin with its computer-generated 'other self' brings Hayden's underlying modus operandi into an unsparing though often capricious focus. Fiercely committed performances, as might have been expected from the calibre of the artists and ensembles involved, and a disc which deserves attention from all inquiring listeners for some seriously impressive music-making. **Richard Whitehouse**

## Hellawell

'Airs, Waters'

Agricolas<sup>a</sup>. Airs, Waters and Floating Islands<sup>b</sup>.

Etruscan Games<sup>c</sup>. Basho<sup>b</sup>. Degrees of Separation<sup>d</sup>.

Jan Palač and the Flaming Skier<sup>e</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Robert Plane cl <sup>d</sup>Darragh Morgan vn <sup>be</sup>Mary Dullea pf

<sup>c</sup>Fidelio Trio; <sup>ad</sup>RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra /

Pierre-André Valade

Delphian © DCD34114 (74' • DDD)



### Orchestral and chamber works by Belfast professor Hellawell

A composer often underestimated, Piers Hellawell has amassed a substantial output which has been the focus of several discs, this latest taking in six works from almost two decades of creativity. Earliest is *Jan Palač and the Flaming Skier* (1990), its commemorating of those who fell at the collapse of the Iron Curtain expressed in obliquely blues-inflected terms. The piano pieces confirm an idiomatic and, moreover, unselfconscious approach to the medium – the inventive play on clusters and chorales of *Airs, Waters and Floating Islands*

(1995) being complemented by the breezily engaging motivic variants of *Basho* (1997). *Degrees of Separation* (2004) is a lucid and luminous orchestral study in gradually decelerating momentum, while *Etruscan Games* (2007) is nominally a four-movement piano trio – the expressive essence of its initial three movements reconfigured and elaborated during the lengthy and cumulative finale. Most impressive, however, is *Agricolas* (2008), its two movements comprising six main sections connected by bridge passages analogous to the objects and supports found in sculpture, and whose Epilogue is a synthesis of affecting poise.

The performances do the music proud, not least the limpidly precise pianism of Mary Dullea and soulful clarinet-playing of Robert Plane, while the sound has a clarity and perspective equally evident in solo and chamber as in orchestral pieces. Hellawell himself contributes extensive booklet-notes in which his concern for the efficacy of work titles leads him to some thought-provoking conclusions – a quality that is seldom, if ever, absent from his compositions. **Richard Whitehouse**

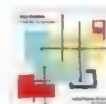
## Holmboe

Chamber Symphonies – No 1, Op 53;

No 2, 'Elegy', Op 100; No 3, 'Frieze', Op 103a

Lapland Chamber Orchestra / John Storgårds

Dacapo © 6 220621 (69' • DDD/DSD)



### Lapland ensemble record the Dane's chamber symphonies

If you do not know them (and how would you? Only No 1 has even been broadcast in the UK – a fine account conducted by the late Richard Hickox in the early 1980s), Vagn Holmboe's three Chamber Symphonies are superb encapsulations of his full-orchestral symphonic manner on a small scale. Holmboe confirmed to me once that they could be considered part of his main symphonic canon (unlike the *Chairos* sinfonias, which he felt used a quite different medium). The First was composed just before *Sinfonia boreale* (Symphony No 8, 1951–52), with which it shares an atmosphere of high endeavour. The grandeur Holmboe elicits from his small ensemble and basic thematic material is a lesson in compositional craft, the creation of a whole (considerably) greater than the sum of its parts. Long a favourite score of mine, John Storgårds and the Lapland Chamber Orchestra do it full justice.

They are equally on their mettle in Nos 2 (1968) and 3 (1969–70), contemporary with the Ninth and Tenth Symphonies. The Second's title, *Elegy*, may, as annotator Jens Cornelius suggests, derive from Holmboe's self-questioning after his resignation from teaching but its atmosphere – and length, at 29 minutes, the longest of the three – suggests deeper concerns. The Third, *Frieze* ('Frieze') was



'Extreme contrasts': Gabriel Feltz conducts the Stuttgart Philharmonic in a live recording of Mahler's Fourth

written to mark the creation of a ceramic frieze in an Aalborg school; abstract in design, its musical argument (which he decanted into a miniature *cantata profana*) again compels attention across six concentrated movements that give the impression of expansiveness. Excellent performances, superb sound: you will not hear a finer disc this year. **Guy Rickards**

## Khachaturian • Mussorgsky • Rimsky-Korsakov



**Khachaturian** *Gayaneh* **Mussorgsky** *A Night on the Bare Mountain* **Rimsky-Korsakov** *Sheherazade*  
**Czech Philharmonic Orchestra / Zdeněk Chalabala**  
Supraphon mono © 2 SU4094-2 (109' • AAD)  
Recorded 1953-55



### A 1950s selection in mono under the baton of Chalabala

Zdeněk Chalabala's greatest claim to fame was as an opera conductor – in Prague, Brno and at the Bolshoi – and if asked to name his principal quality in purely orchestral music it would be that same theatrical flare. Most famous are his stereo versions of the four late Erben tone-poems by Dvořák (also on Supraphon), exceptional performances by any standards that still serve as credible benchmarks, even in comparison with Václav Talich. The present 1953 recording of *Sheherazade* suggests a very vivid narrative, with exceptional contributions from various Czech Philharmonic soloists – the (uncredited) concertmaster, principal cello and woodwind desk leads especially. Chalabala's precise pointing of detail recalls the best of Reiner and Dorati (the second movement is good example) and his hard-driving approach to the more dramatic music pays dividends in 'The Festival of Baghdad', an exceptionally taut

and incisive performance which actually sounds faster than it is and finds the Czech players on their toes every bar of the way.

The 1955 *Night on the Bare Mountain* is even more impressive, a free-spirited, swaggering performance, equally taut, with heavy brass choirs, biting strings, screeching woodwinds and a bass drum that at times sounds as if might be as well placed in Verdi's 'Dies irae' (beam up 6'04"). The *Gayaneh* selections return us to 1953 for a spirited and often sensitive run of performances, the opening 'Entrance' providing a good example of Chalabala's fiercely rhythmic approach, fiery but firm. He can be perky à la Beecham ('Dance of the Rose Maidens', with more delicious pointing), warmly expressive ('Gayaneh's Adagio'), rabble-rousing ('Dance of the Highlanders', 'Fire' and 'Sabre Dance') and up for a good dance ('Gopak'). The selection is custom-built, which means that we hear a fair amount of unfamiliar music, including 'Lyrical Duet' (which includes the subsidiary theme of the 'Sabre Dance') and the nine and a half minutes' worth of 'Gayaneh and Giko'. All the recordings have been well transferred and, provided you're not monophobic, this exciting double-pack should earn itself a favoured place in your collection, certainly for this repertoire. **Rob Cowan**

## Lalo

*Concerto russe*<sup>a</sup>. *Fantaisie-ballet*<sup>a</sup>. *Guitare*<sup>a</sup>.

*Romance-Sérénade*<sup>a</sup>. *Piano Concerto*<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Jean-Jacques Kantorow *vn* <sup>b</sup>Pierre-Alain Volondat *pf*

**Tapiola Sinfonietta / Kees Bakels**

BIS © BIS-SACD1890 (72' • DDD/DSD)



### Final disc in Kantorow's Lalo concertos series on BIS

With this second disc, BIS completes its recording of Lalo's *concertante* violin works.

Here once again is confirmation that Sarasate inspired writing geared towards his legendary virtuosity. A reciprocal arrangement, Lalo composed and Sarasate performed what were surely ideal gifts for his romantic showmanship – though he ignored the *Concerto russe*, causing the composer hurt and incomprehension.

Incomprehension because this ambitious four-movement work shows Lalo at his most scintillating and light-hearted rather than emulating a heavy Teutonic tradition. As in the *Symphonie espagnole*, there is a bias towards Spain, though there are authentic Russian melodies in the second and fourth movements. Lalo finds his most appealing form in the third-movement *Intermezzo*, and the *Romance-Sérénade* will delight all those who love high-flying romanticism. The *Fantaisie-ballet* (orchestrated by Pierné) was greatly admired in its first form by the notoriously critical Debussy and ends in dazzling and seductive style.

The Piano Concerto (recorded years ago by Orazio Frugoni) offered as a filler is, however, disappointing, its musing and poetic opening leading only to much rhetorical panting and puffing. The finale, too, is over-emphatic, though the entire work could hardly be played with greater assurance and affection than by Volondat (first-prize winner of the 1983 Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels) and Jean-Jacques Kantorow's brilliance evokes memories of Sarasate himself. The recordings are exemplary in sound and balance. **Bryce Morrison**

## MacMillan

*A Deep but Dazzling Darkness*<sup>a</sup>.

*I (A Meditation on Iona)*. *Veni, veni, Emmanuel*<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Gordan Nikolitch *vn* <sup>b</sup>Colin Currie *perc*

**Netherlands Radio Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra / James MacMillan**

Challenge Classics © CC72540 (70' • DDD)



### New and old MacMillan concertos from Amsterdam

It was probably both a blessing and a curse that James MacMillan should have enjoyed such phenomenal success with his percussion concerto *Veni, veni, Emmanuel*, composed 20 years ago for Evelyn Glennie. Living up to the reputation that the piece earned for him has not always been easy but the two other, more recent works on this CD tap a seam of inspiration hardly less fertile than the one that he so dramatically mined back in 1992. This is the first disc in a projected series with the Netherlands Radio Chamber Philharmonic, of which MacMillan was appointed permanent guest conductor in 2010.

*A Deep but Dazzling Darkness*, completed in 2002, is scored for solo violin, ensemble and tape, the tape contributing sounds of human anguish from an uncredited chorus of lost souls. At almost 24 minutes the music is

overstretched; but Gordan Nikolitch is the potent violinist in his expressions of Shostakovich-like apprehension and the orchestra paints an unnerving backdrop of darkness and flickers of light.

*Ī*, MacMillan's meditation on the island of Iona from 1996, is altogether more focused, more concentrated, more direct in its evocation of mood, containing the elements of rhapsody within a more disciplined framework. And then there is *Veni, veni, Emmanuel* itself, with the inestimable Colin Currie firing the percussive battery. *Veni, veni*, now in the pantheon of contemporary classics, sounds as wonderfully fresh, imaginative, rhythmically impulsive and vibrantly colourful as it did all those years ago at its Proms premiere. **Geoffrey Norris**

## Mahler

Symphony No 4

Jeannette Wernecke *sop*

Stuttgart Philharmonic Orchestra / Gabriel Feltz

Dreyer Gaido © CD21072 (59' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live at the Liederhalle Beethovensaal, Stuttgart, January 25, 2011



Feltz and his Stuttgart band  
live in Mahler's Fourth

Another relatively lightweight Fourth, recorded live in glorious sound, proves interpretatively a curate's egg. On the rostrum is Gabriel Feltz, chief conductor of the Stuttgart Philharmonic since the 2004-05 season and a man whose repertoire embraces both symphonic Rachmaninov and operatic Nono. His Mahler series certainly shows off the prowess of his relatively unheralded ensemble. Even if this plainly isn't the Budapest Festival Orchestra, the playing is buoyant and alive as well as disciplined. The inner movements are hard to fault, eloquent and translucent in a manner that can afford to do without the richness of sonority available elsewhere. Only the opening of the gates of paradise seems a little bald. The first movement, on the other hand, is one of those restless and choppy affairs (worlds away from the straightforward serenity of older interpretations) in which the players are encouraged to dart forwards at the slightest pretext. The finale, much less abrupt, is rather stymied by the contribution of a well-intentioned soprano: vibrato undermines her game attempt at childlike characterisation.

The conductor's fondness for extreme contrasts may or may not have something to do with the synaesthetic way he looks at Mahler's invention in a booklet-note of his own devising.

Attractive packaging and lovely sound with striking depth of perspective as captured in the 2100-seat Beethovensaal, the largest space in Stuttgart's Liederhalle; but why will record companies not separately track the concluding applause? As so often the spell is broken, here after about 10 seconds. Surely this is not appropriate for repeated listening. Must one always reach for the remote? Over to you.

**David Gutman**

*Selected comparison:*

Persson, Budapest Fest Orch, I Fischer

(4/09) (CHNN) CCSSA26109

## Martinů

Concerto for Harpsichord and Small Orchestra, H246<sup>a</sup>. Chamber Music No 1, 'Les fêtes nocturnes', H376. Les rondes, H200<sup>b</sup>. La revue de cuisine, H161<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Robert Hill *hpd* Holst Sinfonietta / <sup>ac</sup>Klaus Simon <sup>b</sup>pf

Naxos © 8 572485 (75' • DDD)



German chamber orchestra  
record archetypal Martinů

The Harpsichord Concerto may be first up in the Holst Sinfonietta's entertaining programme but for most the chief interest will lie in the full version of the ballet *La revue de cuisine*, given here in Christopher Hogwood's edition. This is



Gimell

not its first outing on disc, Hogwood himself having recorded it with members of the Czech Philharmonic a decade ago. That recording remains first choice but the Holst Sinfonietta's is full of verve (as is their playing on this disc) and at super-budget price is very tempting.

Hogwood coupled his account with two other ballet scores from the same year (1927) whereas Klaus Simon has put together an intriguing programme of other chamber ensemble pieces, including the delightful dance suite *Les rondes* (1930) and the serene late Chamber Music No 1 (1959). For both of these, the Holst Sinfonietta face strong competition. Timpani's Luxembourgish players are superbly recorded and there is nothing to choose between them and the newcomer; the Danish Chamber Players are let down acoustically, as RL noted in his original review (they also include *Revue de cuisine* but just the familiar suite). Ensemble Calliopée on Alpha shade the decision in Chamber Music No 1 but the main interest there is the recently discovered String Trio, H136.

The Harpsichord Concerto (1935) is not one of Martinů's finest pieces but has some nice moments: the opening *Poco allegro*'s can't-get-it-out-of-one's-head tune and the combination of the soloist with the orchestral piano. Hill's account is not quite the match of Zuzana Růžicková's second but Naxos's sound is clearly superior. **Guy Rickards**

*Revue de cuisine* – selected comparison:

Czech PO, Hogwood (11/04) (SUPR) SU3749-2

*Rondes, Chbr Music No 1* – selected comparisons:

Danish Chbr Phrs (11/96) (KONT) 32227

Luxembourg PO, Foster (TIMP) IC1130

*Chbr Music No 1* – selected comparison:

Ens Calliopée (10/09) (ALPH) ALPHA143

*Hpd Conc* – selected comparison:

Růžicková, Slovak Rad CO, Košler (7/94) (CAMP) RRCD1321

## Mendelssohn

Violin Concertos<sup>a</sup> – Op 64; in E minor.

The Hebrides, 'Fingal's Cave', Op 26

<sup>a</sup>Allina Ibragimova <sup>vn</sup> Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment / Vladimir Jurowski

Hyperion © CDA67795 (56' • DDD)



**Period instruments all round for Ibragimova and OAE**

This performance of the E minor Concerto is splendid in many ways. The OAE, with its period instruments, delivers textures of unusual transparency and Alina Ibragimova's playing combines verve, brilliance and imaginative intelligence. Mendelssohn's dynamics are scrupulously observed – the *pianissimo* before the first movement's cadenza is breathtaking and the short *Allegretto* that introduces the finale, played exactly as written, is exceptionally eloquent. But if listeners imagine that they are hearing an approximation of an 1840s

performance, they should think again.

No one could accuse Ibragimova of vibrating excessively, yet she uses vibrato in the modern way, to aid tone production and projection. Violinists of Mendelssohn's day made only occasional use of vibrato to pinpoint particular notes and, crucially, they would have made much more frequent use of expressive slides. The result may not have been as suave and polished as this performance but I can imagine it would have been more vivid and compelling.

The account of *Fingal's Cave*, like the Concerto, scores on clarity but I feel the wildness of Mendelssohn's landscape is somewhat toned down. The playing is neat, precise and often expressive but the fast violin passages lack the necessary stormy quality. The first movement of the D minor Concerto, too, with its elegantly phrased orchestral *tuttis*, seems to belong more to the Age of Enlightenment than the Romantic era to which even the 13-year-old Mendelssohn subscribed. Ibragimova, however, wins us over both in the *Andante* (sweetly expressive) and the finale (mischievous and witty). **Duncan Druce**

## Shostakovich

Piano Concertos<sup>a</sup> – No 1, Op 35<sup>b</sup>; No 2, Op 102.

Hamlet – Suite, Op 32a

<sup>a</sup>Valentina Igoshina <sup>pf</sup> <sup>b</sup>Thomas Hammes <sup>tp</sup>

Deutsche Kammerakademie Neuss /

Lavard Skou-Larsen

CPO © CPO777 750-2 (70' • DDD)



**Both concertos from 1993  
Rubinstein competition victor**

Valentina Igoshina plays the two Shostakovich piano concertos with technical aplomb, an abundance of colour and spacious phrasing. But the time has long past when such solid virtues might add up to a competitive version; there are now numerous versions that demonstrate sharper insight into the world of Shostakovich's imagination. Her playing lacks naughtiness and nervous anxiety, and she seems not to grasp that the standard concerto rhetoric Shostakovich occasionally goes in for is all tongue-in-cheek, since she regularly either musicalises or inflates it. Her attempts to bring out the humour to the finale of the First Concerto are heavy-handed and unsubtle.

That this is more than just a matter of taste becomes clear from any 10-second extract you might choose from Alexander Melnikov, whose leaner and meaner approach pays huge dividends. Knowing that much of the surface is not to be taken seriously, Melnikov paradoxically penetrates to depths whose existence Igoshina does not begin to glimpse. When she tries to find depth in the slow movement of the Second Concerto, she becomes merely laboured, where Melnikov is breathtakingly trance-like. Lavard

Skou-Larsen and the admirable musicians of the Deutsche Kammerakademie Neuss have more of a chance to show what they can do in the 1932 *Hamlet* Suite and acquit themselves more than decently. But for greater theatrical understanding, and for the entire score rather than just the Suite, I'd recommend Mark Elder and the CBSO, most recently incarnated on Signum Classics. **David Fanning**

*Concertos* – selected comparison:

Melnikov, Mabler CO, Currentzis

(5/12) (HARM) HMC90 2104

## Stravinsky • Honegger • Martin



Honegger Pacific 231. Rugby Martin Violin

Concerto<sup>a</sup> Stravinsky Violin Concerto<sup>b</sup>. Circus Polka

<sup>a</sup>Baiba Skride <sup>vn</sup>

BBC National Orchestra of Wales / Thierry Fischer

Orfeo © C849 121A (76' • DDD)



**Two concertos and two ballets  
from Fischer and BBC NOW**

Quite an ear-opener. The Stravinsky Violin Concerto is little short of a revelation, lean and keen, with the kind of inner clarity that you never get with this degree of immediacy from an average seat in the concert hall. The consequence of this is a heightening of the work's harmonic daring and wit. Baiba Skride has the measure of its hybrid nature, striking an ideal balance between its Classical/Baroque cut and thrust and its Romantic inclinations. 'Aria II' is very beautiful indeed, its melodic embellishments tripping off the bow with harmonic support in the orchestral strings that is more sensitively heard and more 'aware' than I have experienced in any recording of the piece. But then it's the interplay of voices that consistently springs surprises. All credit to Thierry Fischer, producer Andrew Keener and, of course, the big-personality wind soloists of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales.

Credit, too, for whoever came up with the idea of coupling the little-heard Frank Martin Concerto. With that we are removed to another world, mysterious and fantastical, which Martin tells us is inspired by Prospero's island from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Ariel rules here at Prospero's bidding and Skride is an ethereal presence throughout, weaving her spells through the subtlest Ravelian textures and achieving one moment of breathtaking stasis at the close of the slow movement where Prospero's – or should that be Martin's – magic achieves a sombre grandeur.

As for Honegger's two orchestral showpieces: *Pacific 231* builds a fine head of steam, its orchestral mechanism, its squealing pistons and the like vividly revealed (how often this piece sounds more thickly scored than it is). Its majestic horn-led arrival is bang on schedule. *Rugby* is the mechanistic equivalent in

male muscle and sinew, full of testosterone and resolve and, in Fischer's hands, a kind of awkward grace. The same might be said of Stravinsky's Barnum and Bailey elephants, whose idea of a polka has never chimed with mine. **Edward Seckerson**

## Suk

A Summer's Tale, Op 29. Praga, Op 26  
**BBC Symphony Orchestra / Jiří Bělohlávek**  
 Chandos © CHSA5109 (80' • DDD/DSD)



### Latest in BBC Symphony Orchestra's Suk series

Regarding British performances of music from beyond these shores, Jiří Bělohlávek is to Czech repertoire what John Wilson is to Broadway: both have imported unprecedented levels of musical authenticity, in Bělohlávek's case climaxing in his superb live Martinů symphony cycle (also for Chandos) and this fine coupling of works by Josef Suk. The added advantage here is the exceptional acoustic of the Watford Colosseum, potentially a godsend but only when a crack production team knows how to exploit its strongest qualities.

Both scores convey the essence of Suk's orchestral style, his wide range of musical

moods, the subtlety of his palette, his expert use of solo instruments (woodwinds especially), his distinctive harmonic language and his ability to chart powerful climaxes without resorting to bombast. In lesser hands the close of *Praga* can sound like a filmic recollection of *Má vlast*'s finale but not here, where the cumulative impact of the piece (complete with thundering organ) is immense. *Praga* does indeed call on the famous Hussite theme that Smetana ruggedly manipulates in 'Tábor' and the effect achieved by Suk is similarly humbling. Bělohlávek's performance presents a more integrated tone-canvas than does Libor Pešek with the Czech Philharmonic for Supraphon, where the brass are more strident, though the Czech woodwinds are inimitably individual.

Pešek's coupling, like Bělohlávek's, is the sizeable, at times Scriabinesque *A Summer's Tale*, a slightly later piece that calls on those same qualities of interpretation – sensitive balancing, an appreciation of textual variety, a keen appreciation of shifting perspectives and an ear for musical line. As with *Praga*, this richly scored and often exciting early-20th-century score is infused with local flavouring, at times disquieting (startling premonitions of Shostakovich's Eleventh Symphony at 2'52" into the second movement, 'Midday'), and

Bělohlávek holds the tension in both pieces from the first bar to the last. Wonderful!

**Rob Cowan**

*Praga – selected comparison:*

Czech PO, Pešek (12/85<sup>8</sup>) (SUPR) SU3864-2

## Svendsen

'Orchestral Works, Vol 2'  
 Cello Concerto, Op 7<sup>a</sup>. Norwegian Rhapsodies – No 3, Op 21; No 4, Op 22. Symphony No 2, Op 15  
<sup>a</sup>Truls Mørk vc  
**Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra / Neeme Järvi**  
 Chandos © CHAN10711 (72' • DDD)



### Second disc in Bergen Phil's Svendsen series for Chandos

Completed just as his friend Wagner was starting rehearsals for the first *Ring* in Bayreuth, Svendsen's Second Symphony is a step forwards from his 1865 first essay in the genre. A similar lightness and wit – and a recognisable base in Norwegian dance material (especially, of course, the *scherso*'s imitation Halling) – is now counterpointed by a use of longer-ranging melodies. And the formal structure, like that of the Cello Concerto here, now owes more to Liszt's symphonic poems than Mendelssohnian manoeuvres acquired in



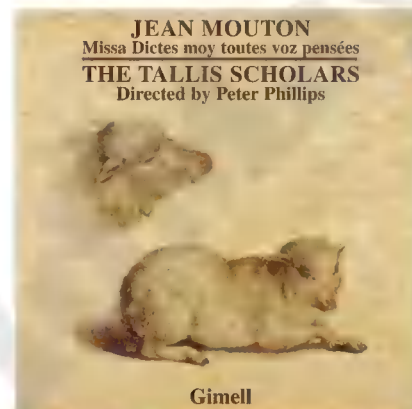
Jean Mouton was routinely compared in his lifetime with Josquin on account of his astonishing compositional technique yet his music is quite distinct, able to convey a unique spirit of calm and poise.

*The 3 solo basses featured in the Agnus Dei II from Mouton's Missa Dictes moy toutes voz pensées: Tim Scott Whiteley, Rob Macdonald and Stephen Charlesworth*

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**Loyset Compère** (c1445–1518)  
 Dictes moy toutes voz pensées

**Jean Mouton** (before 1459–1522)  
 Missa Dictes moy toutes voz pensées  
 Quis dabit oculis?  
 Ave Maria ... benedicta tu  
 Salva nos, Domine  
 Ave Maria ... virgo serena  
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[www.thesixteen.com](http://www.thesixteen.com)

Leipzig. The first movement is also most aware (shall we say) of the melody and shape of the opening exposition of Schumann's *Rhenish*. Järvi, perhaps influenced by his recent Wagner excursions on disc, gives the symphony an appropriately darker, more dramatic colour than rivals including Jansons, Engeset or Dausgaard. I haven't heard Järvi's own previous Gothenburg recording (BIS, 11/87).

The Cello Concerto (1870) stands on that interesting cusp between Romantic and earlier-20th-century concerto forms, with Truls Mørk (beautifully recorded) as mixture of soloist and *primus inter pares*. The anarchic manner in which musical utterance dominates form is reminiscent of later Czech composers like Janáček and Martinů. A fascinating and addictive work that deserves more airings.

In comparison with the above works, the Rhapsodies are more bread-and-butter. Nationalist business-as-usual compositions, they follow in the steps of the Liszt Rhapsodies that Svendsen had recently orchestrated and rather lack the charm of similar Grieg excursions. But Järvi and his Norwegians are on scintillating form throughout and the Cello Concerto and dark reading of the Symphony are to be treasured. **Mike Ashman**

*Sym No 2 – selected comparisons:*

Oslo PO, Jansons (11/88\*) (EMI) 585069-2

Bournemouth SO, Engeset (A/98) (NAXO) 8 553898

Danish Nat Rad SO, Dausgaard (11/01) (CHAN) CHAN9932

## Tchaikovsky

Symphony No 1, 'Winter Daydreams', Op 13.

The Snow Maiden, Op 12 – Introduction; Melodrama; Dance of the Tumblers

Cologne Gürzenich Orchestra / Dmitri Kitaenko  
Oehms Classics © 1998 OC668 (61' • DDD/DSD)



'Winter Daydreams' revisited  
by Kitaenko in Cologne

The *Stereo Record Guide* commented in 1960: 'Not so long ago it was considered fashionable even when writing literature of appraisal to make it clear to the reader that the writer had intellectual reservations to temper any emotional appreciation for Tchaikovsky's music. Indeed, the enthusiast for Tchaikovsky was strictly non-U! Today it seems that this great Russian composer may well have written some masterpieces after all and his much-maligned last three symphonies may have symphonic as well as melodic and harmonic merit.' That was the view more than 50 years ago but today the last three symphonies are truly admired. Curiously, however, No 1 is not; yet it is a true symphonic masterpiece in its own right, which Karajan celebrated in his first integral survey of the six works.

Tchaikovsky himself was rather fond of it and I happen to think it is every bit as fine a work as the First Symphony of Beethoven.

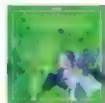
It is structurally virtually perfect. The first movement, to which the composer gave the superscript 'Dream of a Winter's Journey', is hauntingly melodic, with a superb reprise of the main theme on the horns. The yearning *Adagio* (wonderfully played here) is full of Russian melancholy and the *scherzo* has the composer's first engaging symphonic waltz as its Trio. The finale is suitably Russian, and exuberant too, like the 'Dance of the Tumblers' that closes the *Snow Maiden* excerpts with comparable vigour. Altogether this is a splendidly played coupling with wonderfully idiomatic understanding by the Gürzenich Orchestra, so sensitively conducted by Dmitri Kitaenko; his account of the symphony's *Adagio* is very moving, as is the central movement of the *Snow Maiden* music. A disc not to be missed on any account. **Ivan March**

## Telemann

'Complete Violin Concertos, Vol 4'

Overture Concertos – TWV55:G6; TWV55:E3;  
TWV55:G7

L'Orfeo Baroque Orchestra / Elizabeth Wallfisch vn  
CPO © CPO777 242-2 (62' • DDD)



Fourth instalment in Wallfisch's  
complete concerto cycle

Billed as Vol 4 of a complete edition of Telemann's violin concertos, the three works recorded here are hybrids; in the form of suites introduced by an overture in the French style, each movement includes passages for solo violin. This format doesn't allow for the same development of the solo part that we find in the Vivaldian concerto but, even where the violin has a purely decorative role, Telemann's inventiveness gives variety and life to the musical substance. In the overtures, the soloist makes her mark in the quick middle sections – the informal, unpredictable dialogue with the orchestra in the E major Suite (E3) is particularly fascinating. The most common pattern in the dance movements is to use the 'Minuet and Trio' form, with outer sections for the full band enclosing a solo middle section. A particularly beautiful example is the Loure in the G major Suite (G6), where the orchestra continues the dance rhythm while the soloist develops an expressive cantilena.

It's clear that Elizabeth Wallfisch and the Orfeo Baroque Orchestra have worked closely together to produce lively, finely integrated performances. The orchestra is tiny – a string section of just eight players, joined by oboes and bassoon in the G major and G minor (G7) Suites – but a resonant recording helps to give body to the sound. Even so, I could imagine that a few more violins would produce textures with greater depth and variety. Nevertheless, the disc can be thoroughly recommended: appealing music, performed with real expertise and understanding. **Duncan Druce**

## Weber

Clarinet Concerto No 1, Op 73 J114<sup>a</sup>. Clarinet Concertino, Op 26 J109<sup>a</sup>. Bassoon Concerto, Op 75 J127<sup>b</sup>. Horn Concertino, Op 45 J188<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Maximiliano Martin cl<sup>b</sup>Peter Whelan bn

<sup>c</sup>Alec Frank-Gemmill hn

Scottish Chamber Orchestra / Alexander Janiczek

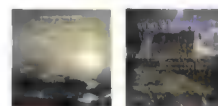
Linn © 1998 CKD409 (65' • DDD/DSD)

## Weber

Clarinet Concertos<sup>a</sup> – No 1, Op 73 J114; No 2, Op 74 J118. Clarinet Concertino, Op 26 J109<sup>a</sup>. Oberon – Overture. Der Beherrscher der Geister – Overture

Orchestra M18 / Martin Spangenberg<sup>a</sup> cl

Dabringhaus und Grimm © 1998 MDG901 1754-6 (66' • DDD/DSD)



Weber woodwind and brass concertos  
from Scottish and German musicians

Weber's clarinet (and horn and bassoon) concertos seem to have joined the 'waiting for a London bus' analogy this year. Here is another contrasting pair of discs, arranged not dissimilarly to those featuring soloists Steffens, Collins and Stirling reviewed in February. Once again the German approach – Martin Spangenberg as both soloist and conducting the youthful Orchestra M18 – presents a darker, more chamber-like approach than Linn's more playful, self-consciously virtuoso SCO interpretations under Alexander Janiczek.

Pushed to a choice, I especially enjoyed Alec Frank-Gemmill's cheeky handling of the runs and decorations in the Horn Concertino, and Spangenberg's and (from the previous release) Karl-Heinz Steffens's moody style in the three clarinet concertos. Spangenberg's communication with the players is never in doubt; he is also recorded slightly further forward, but this is more of a soloist balance, more 1960s Decca stereo than original-instrument informed equality. The inclusion of the two overtures provides an apt context for Weber's dramatic thinking behind the Clarinet Concertos – the E flat major Second more a fellow of *Oberon*, the F minor First of the wilder *The Ruler of the Spirits*. Spangenberg secures scorching performances here, his conductorship far more than honorary.

All four of these discs of Weber's wind music are supportively recorded, all of them revelling in the joy of what is made to feel like a larger scale of chamber music. More important is the chance to enjoy music which, in this country at least, is still known better to practising musicians than to their audiences. **Mike Ashman**

Cl Concs; Cl Concertino – selected comparison:

Steffens, Bamberg SO, Szulc (2/12) (TUDU) TUDOR7159

Cl Concs; Cl Concertino, Hn Concertino – selected comparison:

Collins, Stirling, City of London Sinf

(2/12) (CHAN) CHAN10702

# Chamber



**Philip Clark on Morton Feldman's Crippled Symmetry:**  
*'We're talking about another essential layer of jam squeezed inside the doughnut of our understanding'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 79**



**David Fanning reviews Shostakovich from Meta4:**  
*'I'm not sure I have ever heard the opening folk-like Allegretto of No 4 more subtly explored'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 83**

## Beethoven

Sonatine, WoO33 Nos 4 & 5 (ed Hess)<sup>a</sup>. Duo 'with two obligato eyeglasses', WoO32<sup>a</sup>. Serenade, Op 8 - Theme and Variations (arr Primrose)<sup>b</sup>. Cello Sonata No 5, Op 102 No 2<sup>c</sup>. Trio, Op 11<sup>d</sup>  
<sup>abd</sup>Maxim Rysanov <sup>va</sup>acdKristina Blaumane <sup>vc</sup>  
<sup>bcd</sup>Jacob Katsnelson <sup>pf</sup>  
Onyx ㉔ ONYX2108 (73' • DDD)



**Rysanov's viola centre-stage for adapted Beethoven**

This is the kind of disc that could easily get overlooked, offering as it does a potpourri of mostly lesser-known Beethoven. But that would be a great shame, for it's packed full of delicious surprises, superbly played. The viola is, of necessity, the thief among the string family, eking out its modest repertoire with that of others. Of the works here, only one might possibly be originally for viola – the alluring Duo for viola and cello (not indicated as such on the score but so well suited to the instruments that it's difficult to imagine Beethoven intended anything else). He wittily subtitled the piece 'Duet with two obligato eyeglasses', probably a reference to the short-sighted Nikolaus Zmeskall, a friend and fine cellist – he'd have needed to be, given the high-lying writing for the instrument.

If you didn't know the original medium of the Theme and Variations (which comes from his Serenade for string trio), I suspect you'd never guess their original format, so beautifully are they reworked for viola and piano by that legendary player William Primrose. Here the drama of the minor-key variation is fully played out and there are plenty of opportunities to relish the beauty of Maxim Rysanov's sound in the upper reaches.

Rysanov turns arranger, too, in the Clarinet Trio, Op 11. Because Beethoven intended the violin as a possible substitute for the wind instrument, he has to do little to adapt it for viola. The rip-roaring finale is particularly effective, dancing with wit and rhythmic élan.

Most of the music here is from the pen of a young man, not yet 30. The exception is Beethoven's last Cello Sonata, in which Kristina Blaumane gives many more established names a real run for their money, with superbly

reactive playing between her and pianist Jacob Katsnelson. After the explosive high-energy first movement, the gravely beautiful slow movement is perfectly gauged, the tension finally released in the finale's fugue – a real *tour de force* here.

The disc's manifold pleasures are complemented by Barry Cooper's masterly notes and a recording that offers an ideal balance between the three players. **Harriet Smith**

## Boccherini

Six Piano Quartets, G259  
La Real Cámara  
Glossa ㉔ GCD920312 (71' • DDD)



**A historical curiosity as string quartets move to the piano**

Despite first appearances, these graceful works for piano, violin, viola and cello are not 'true' piano quartets like Mozart's, nor examples of the accompanied keyboard sonata type popular in the 18th century. No, these are anonymous arrangements of Boccherini's Op 26 string quartets (first published in Vienna in 1781), presumably done for private use since they come from a single manuscript copy dating from the mid-1780s and surviving today in Dresden. They are achieved simply by transferring the first violin part to the keyboardist's right hand and allowing his left hand to double the cello with a few thickening chords added in, and as such are interesting reminders of how music was digested by music lovers in the age before recording. It is somewhat perverse, therefore, that there seem to be no recordings of the Op 26 Quartets in their original form, even though a further arrangement of them for two keyboards was recorded by William Christie and Christophe Rousset (Harmonia Mundi, 4/87).

As ever with Boccherini, this is finely wrought music, occupying a different world from that of Haydn and Mozart despite the similarity of language. They certainly present none of the Viennese pair's developmental dramas, being relaxed and lyrical two-movement works with a beguiling and friendly musical presence which falls easily on the ear and is somehow faintly suggestive of the

composer's adoptive Spain. Two minor-key works hint at a more poignantly veiled expressiveness but really nothing is permitted to ruffle any feathers. The performances, on period instruments, are as pleasing as you could wish for, with Arthur Schoonderwoerd playing a copy of a Stein piano whose delicate tones are exquisitely tintinnabulous even by fortepiano standards. Lovely to listen to, then; but, without wanting to be too purist about it, what's wrong with recording the string quartet originals? **Lindsay Kemp**

## Bruch - Svendsen

**Bruch Concerto for String Octet, Op posth**  
**Svendsen Octet, Op 3**  
Tharice Virtuosi  
Claves ㉔ 50 1207 (68' • DDD)



**Swiss ensemble play eight-part string works**

There is a surprisingly contrasted programme on this disc, which looks at first to be a slightly esoteric survey of obscure Nordic string music. It is illuminated, though, by the juxtaposition of Bruch's last work and Svendsen's first of note, both pieces coming as they do from composers more at home in large-scale forms, and so perhaps the performances retain their mainstream chamber sensibilities only on the back of their appreciation of the pieces' origins. They weren't written too long after Mendelssohn's great Octet, then (as now) generally accepted to be the first and best example of an unusual genre: the benign influence of Mendelssohn in the background (there is a lot of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in there, as well as the ubiquitous Octet) creates a wholly unique sound when combined, especially in the Svendsen, with the unavoidable inclusion of the composers' native folk tunes.

The variety of backgrounds of the players on this disc brings a really artistic sense of collaboration to the performance. What it doesn't honour, though, is our traditional perception of the dourness of the Nordic temperament; and, far from the sobriety of composers such as Larsson and Nielsen, this disc leads the listener into a joyful world of cheerful Vikings by way of its folkloric rhythms

and intervals. Not that this performance bears the same rusticity, though, and although their size means they have almost infinite permutations, it is in this no-man's land between chamber ensemble and chamber orchestra that the enormously polished Tharice Virtuosi create something really special. **Caroline Gill**

## HW Davies • Holst • Vaughan Williams

**HW Davies** Violin Sonata **Holst** Five Pieces

**Vaughan Williams** Violin Sonata

**Rupert Marshall-Luck** *vn* **Matthew Rickard** *pf*

EM Records © EMRCD006 (63' • DDD)



Lesser-known works from major English composers

Rupert Marshall-Luck has long been a champion of overlooked English music of a certain age and this recording is a new addition to a catalogue that includes hidden violin music by Bantock, Gurney and Sacheverell Coke. This disc is slightly different, though, in that while it is an overview of lesser-known works, they are of well-known composers. The span is wide – from 1893 to 1954 – and although they are nicely contrasting they are insubstantial pieces, and it is the saving grace of this disc that Marshall-Luck and his accompanist Matthew Rickard elegantly apply their fine playing to its performance in the same spirit. Five short decorative pieces by Holst, all free-standing but published within two years of each other at the start of the 20th century, stand next to a sonata by Henry Walford Davies; and whereas the Walford Davies is, like the Holst, a first recording, it is harder to see why that music in particular has been so long ignored. Marshall-Luck and Rickard capture its quintessential Englishness beautifully.

So, although it may be that this music is not from the same mould as the great works of the composers represented on this disc, it is nevertheless a perfectly pitched representation of a particular genre. If you don't buy this disc for the complexity of its musical language, buy it for the decorous playing and absolute purity of its origins. **Caroline Gill**

## Dvořák

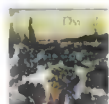
**String Quartets** – No 9, Op 34 B75;

No 13, Op 106 B192

**Zemlinsky Quartet**

Praga Digitals © PRD/DSD250 292

(70' • DDD/DSD)



The Zemlinskys link an unlikely pair of Dvořák string quartets

It's a slightly odd pairing, these two quartets of Dvořák – the butterfly-minded No 9, written when Dvořák was of a mature age but which



Laura Buruliana: delicate and refined in Enescu

was nevertheless rejected by its dedicatees (the Bennowitz Quartet) for its lack of quartet style, standing alongside the relief-sodden No 13, written almost as soon as he returned home from his sojourn in America. They do, though, frame the iconic *American* Quartet and those years he spent in the United States between 1892 and 1895, so, as fiercely patriotic as he was (and as homesick as he had been), this combination serves in many ways simply to illustrate the wilfulness with which he had not changed over those intervening years.

Although his output of chamber music was extensive and varied, it is shot with a strengthening thread of patriotism that may have served him well during his teaching sojourn in America, to challenge his students to be tenacious in developing their own identity, but which can leave those listening to his own music with a sense of staticness. However, the

Zemlinskys play in a way that is so fluid and warmly rooted in rich tonal colour, and characteristic of their perfect ensemble (especially in the grating parallel chords of the opening movement of Op 9), that it is easy to hear why it is they are so representative of the Czech quartet tradition of groups such as the Bohemian and Smetana Quartets. They embrace Dvořák's native melodies as if they are in their blood. **Caroline Gill**

## Enescu

**Two Cello Sonatas**, Op 26

**Laura Buruliana** *vc* **Martin Tchiba** *pf*

Naxos © 8 570582 (69' • DDD)



Two sonatas 37 years apart profile Enescu young and old Enescu's two cello sonatas, despite their common opus number, were composed

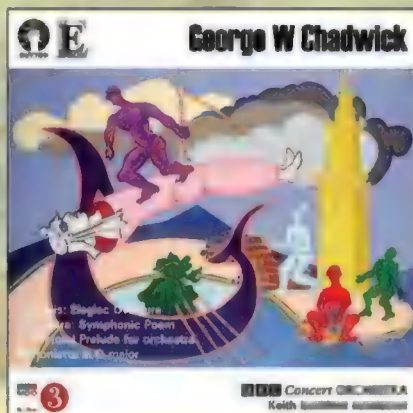


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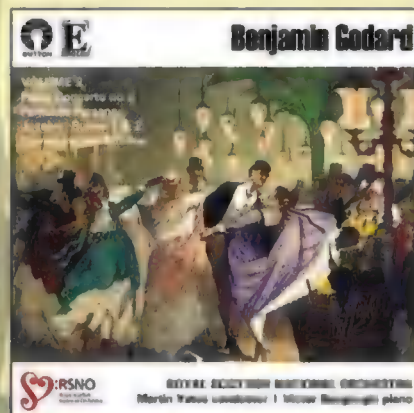


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Adonais: Elegiac Overture  
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WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

George W Chadwick (1854-1931) was a leading American composer of his day. Conductor Keith Lockhart explores unrecorded repertoire by Chadwick – the delightful, affirmative *Pastoral Prelude* of 1890 written when Chadwick was 36, the Shelley-inspired 'elegiac overture' *Adonais* of 1899 and the gorgeous, impressionistic symphonic poem *Cleopatra* of 1904 with its 'lush and amorous' tune for *Cleopatra* and 'big clashing battle scene'. Coupling these works is the *Sinfonietta* in D major of 1904, effectively the composer's fifth symphony, presented here in its first CD recording. This is immediately approachable lyrical music, with one of Chadwick's most memorable melodies in the scherzo of the *Sinfonietta*.

## GODARD

Volume 2  
Ouverture des Guelfes  
Piano Concerto No.2  
Fantaisie Persane  
Jocelyn: two suites  
from the opera  
VICTOR SANGIORGIO piano  
Royal Scottish  
National Orchestra  
MARTIN YATES  
CDLX 7291  
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WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS  
Volume 1 CDLX 7274



Following the remarkable success of Victor Sangiorgio's recording of Benjamin Godard's delightful First Piano Concerto for Dutton Epoch, we now have Godard's even more tuneful Second Concerto of 1893 and the colourful *Fantaisie Persane* (1894), also for piano and orchestra, both of which are essential listening for Godard fans. Conductor Martin Yates completes the programme with orchestral music from two of Godard's operas – the powerful overture to *Les Guelfes* of 1882 and the orchestral suites from *Jocelyn* (1887), until now only remembered for the enchanting *Berceuse*, here played by Aleksei Kiseliyov in its version for cello and orchestra.

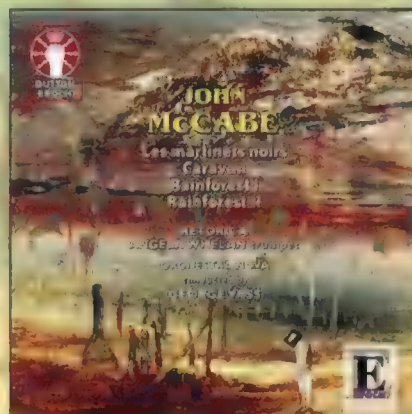
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The Feldman Soloists perform *Crippled Symmetry* in 2000

37 years apart. The youthful, Brahmsian First (1898) was written at white-hot speed apparently in just 12 days, yet this large-scale, 40-minute sonata never sounds rushed, its musical flow effortless for all the rigour of the opening *Allegro molto moderato*. The succeeding *Allegretto scherzando* is a delightful interlude, nicely paced between the opening span and the beautiful *Molto andante*. The *Presto* finale recapitulates the opposition of vigorous masculine and lilting feminine subjects in a vibrant discourse that was no small achievement for a composer still only 17 years old.

The Second Sonata (1935) is the product of a creative artist at the height of his powers. Running for a full half an hour, this substantial work in four movements packs a greater expressive punch than its predecessor, at every turn demonstrating the mastery Enescu had attained in the intervening period. The instrumental writing is that of a virtuoso on both a string instrument (violin rather than cello, of course) and piano.

I had not encountered Laura Buruiana before but she turns in sparkling performances of both works. Her tone is well-nigh perfect, delicate and refined, with intonation spot on. Accompanist Martin Tchiba, with whom she has performed since 2004, proves a splendid partner and the pair compel attention throughout in readings and/or sound quality superior to the listed rivals. It is recorded at a

slightly low level, so turn the volume up a fraction from your normal chamber music setting. A highly recommendable disc.

**Guy Rickards**

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## Feldman

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Spring of Chosroes. Extensions 1. Extensions 3. Vertical Thoughts 2. Vertical Thoughts 4. For Aaron Copland. Piece for Violin and Piano. Projection IV. Piece for Four Pianos. For John Cage

**Andreas Seidel** *vi* **Steffen Schleiermacher** *pf*  
Dabringhaus und Grimm (M) (2) MDG613 1524-2  
(135' • DDD)

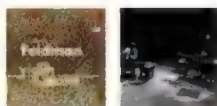
## Feldman

'Crippled Symmetry: at June in Buffalo'  
Crippled Symmetry

**Feldman Soloists**

Frozen Reeds (M) (2) FR1/2 (89' • DDD)

Recorded live at the UB Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY,  
June 12, 2000



Feldman's seminal *Crippled Symmetry* and assorted works for violin and piano

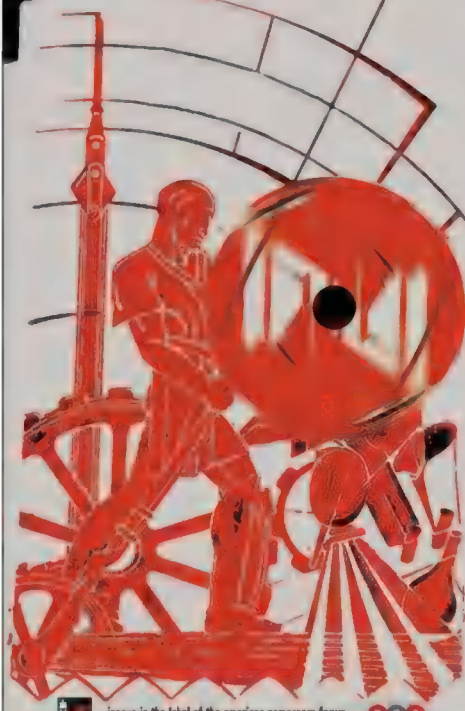
It's violinist Andreas Seidel and pianist Steffen Schleiermacher's bad luck that their recording of Morton Feldman's 1982 *For John Cage* – recorded in 2009, released now presumably as a nod towards Cage's centenary year – had to follow in the wake of Darragh Morgan and John Tilbury's 2010 performance on Matchless, the small Essex-based indie label that consistently punches above its cottage-industry weight. 'Definitive' isn't a word to be brandished lightly but the sheer sonic loveliness of Tilbury's softer-than-softs and Morgan's salamander zigzag slide around Feldman's self-renewing lines is, you guessed it, matchless.

Morgan opts to play with a Baroque bow, Seidel's tone sounding businesslike and efficient in comparison, while Schleiermacher can't match Tilbury's endlessly malleable turnaround of pianistic colourings. MDG's *For John Cage* might well be supplemented with Feldman's early violin-and-piano miniatures – including the all-too-rarely-heard *Spring of Chosroes* and the rare-as-hen's-teeth *For Aaron Copland* – but the main feature is a notch below Morgan/Tilbury and probably below Marc Sabat and Stephen Clarke on Mode, too. Seidel and Schleiermacher play an idea of the music; Morgan and Tilbury play the thing itself.

But every Feldmanista will want a part of 'Crippled Symmetry: at June in Buffalo', the debut release on the new Frozen Reeds label. Eberhard Blum, Jan Williams and Nils

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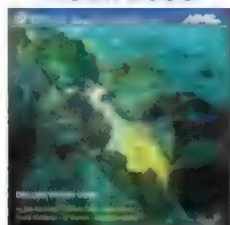
## ALEXANDER GOEHR



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NMC D176

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BCMG, AZALEA/AUSTIN CONCORDIA, SAMUEL BODEN, JOBY BURGESS, SIMON HARAM, DARRAGH MORGAN, HUW WATKINS

## OLIVER KNUSSEN



NMC D178

This NMC recording, to celebrate Oly's 60th birthday, is a chronological tour of his work, starting with the brooding orchestral *Choral*, and the poetic *Autumnal* for violin (both written in the 1970s), through to *Ophelia's Last Dance* from 2010. *Requiem: Songs for Sue*, was written following the death of his wife in 2003. Also on this disc is a live recording of Knussen's luminous Violin Concerto, performed at the BBC Proms by one of the world's exemplary soloists Leila Josefowicz. LEILA JOSEFOWICZ, CLAIRE BOOTH, BCMG, OLIVER KNUSSEN, BBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, HUW WATKINS, ALEXANDRA WOOD, RYAN WIGGLESWORTH

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Vigeland were the core members of Feldman's own touring group and cut a classic studio *Crippled Symmetry* for HatArt in 1990. How does this live *Crippled Symmetry*, recorded in 2000, compare?

That's a tough one to answer, not only because of the music's cosmic scale – it sprawls over a 90-minute duration – but because Feldman has twisted the usual function of notation against itself. Pitch, rhythm, dynamics, articulation are exactly written out but each player's part is rhythmically cut loose from the rest of the ensemble. As performers, the sense of three musicians zoning into an emerging 'rightness' that only their intuition about sound can define – never how the music looks on the page – makes us raise our game as listeners.

It's an exhilarating process. Landmarks float by rather than fix points of arrival and we're jumped into having an active, moment-by-moment relationship with Feldman's material. As a reviewer all I can say is that this performance is exceptionally sensitively heard and expertly measured. After playing it for 10 years, I guess the music was etched deeper inside their souls too. And so we're talking about another essential layer of jam squeezed inside the doughnut of our understanding – more important than an 'alternative' recording in the usual sense. **Philip Clark**

For John Cage – selected comparison:

Morgan, Tilbury (MATC) MRDVD01

## Keeling

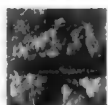
Present<sup>a</sup>. Beacon Hill<sup>a</sup>.

You Cut the String<sup>c</sup>. Unquiet Earth<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Steve Bingham elec vn <sup>d</sup>Valen Trio;

<sup>a</sup>Bingham Quartet; <sup>b</sup>Contact Ensemble

Spaceward © SRS102 (64' • DDD)



String soundscapes from a devotee of King Crimson

Anyone familiar with the name of Andrew Keeling might well be so through a context other than his music, not least as the author of studies on several of King Crimson's progressive rock albums from the 1970s. Those apprehensive of half-baked crossover, however, need not worry, as Keeling's output is nothing if not rigorous in its application of principles and trenchant in formal evolution: modal tonality devoid of the chauvinistic overtones often associated with such thinking.

With its inspiration in Schubert, *Present* (2006) might appear beholden to the classic string quartet literature, yet there is little that fulfils such expectations in music whose juxtaposition of contrasted motion and expression cuts across the four-movement trajectory such that the piece unfolds with purposeful underlying momentum. If *Unquiet Earth* (2005) feels less convincing, this may be because of its overtly discursive content, in

which the more incisive passages seem added in to the prevailing introspection rather than emerging inevitably out of it. *Beacon Hill* (2010) conjures an ominous atmosphere from its instrumental septet, in contrast to the inscrutably abstract progress of *You Cut the String* (2008), with its timbral exploration of the five-string electric violin multitracked and 'looped' in a manner recalling Robert Fripp's hypnotic guitar soundscapes. Dedicated performances, not least from the ever-inquiring Steve Bingham, and crystal-clear sound make for a highly recommendable release – though Spaceward should desist from printing booklet annotations in upper case against a marbled background in future. **Richard Whitehouse**

## Respighi

Violin Sonatas – D minor; B minor. Five Pieces.

Six Pieces – Valse caressante; Serenata

Tanja Becker-Bender vn P  ter Nagy pf

Hyperion © CDA67930 (72' • DDD)



Rarities and miniatures reveal the lesser-known Respighi

Respighi is so often pigeonholed as the composer of those luminous Roman orchestral frescoes and refashionings of musical antiquity that it is refreshing to be reminded that he had other interests as well. A great deal of his music rarely sees the light of day – the operas, for example – but the B minor Violin Sonata of 1917 does have a toehold on the repertoire and discography. Illuminatingly, Tanja Becker-Bender and P  ter Nagy couple it here with the earlier D minor Sonata, written in 1897, when Respighi was still in his late teens. What a strikingly inventive work it is, particularly when played with such passion, purity of tone and poignancy as it is on this disc.

Respighi himself was a gifted violinist, so the idiomatic writing for the instrument is not a source of surprise, but there is also a marked creative individuality that reveals a precocious talent. True, the Austro-German influence of Brahms makes itself felt in the D minor Sonata but, even so, the ear is often alerted to traits that don't sound like Brahms at all and seem to stem from within Respighi's own youthful imagination. The B minor Sonata has its roots firmly in Romantic soil, with glances to both Germany and France, but again the breadth of melody and the general atmosphere of the music speak with a voice that Respighi could claim as his own. Some shorter character pieces, all of them exquisitely crafted miniatures, complete a revelatory programme, performed with rare panache. **Geoffrey Norris**

## Rosenberger

TEXTUREN

Wet Ink Ensemble

hat[now]ART © HATN186 (50' • DDD)



Experiments with time from Swiss composer Rosenberger

In the normal run of things, music has a beginning and an end, with a middle that you find somewhere in between, a convention the Swiss composer Katharina Rosenberger tries to dismiss. *TEXTUREN* (the title is always written in capital letters) was created for the New York-based New Music ensemble Wet Ink and, on paper at least, looks like a cycle of nine self-contained chamber works – eloquently expressive (always lowercase) titles, too: *miroir* for flute and soprano saxophone, *scatter 2.0* for six musicians, *torsion* for solo piano and so on, all composed between 2008 and 2011.

An early hint of Rosenberger's structural mind-tease becomes apparent when you realise that her first piece, *in cloud forests*, is actually labelled *Interlude I* – not 'prologue', 'introduction' or 'preface' but 'interlude'. Rosenberger wouldn't, of course, be the first composer to wish that the temporal narrative of music didn't always have to move forwards in time and instead aim at sound that steadfastly inhabits the continuous present. And Rosenberger's harmony is fit for purpose: as a sine wave of pillowy electronic noise crescendos towards a shrill cut off – fuffffffffTING! – that interruption itself rings a new beginning. The opening gesture is then repeated and intensified, this time the intoning bell dramatically slamming a door on what one assumed was the underlying sound environment. Think again. *TEXTUREN* launches with a hallucination: no room for cosy, linear narratives here.

Although her base gestural language sails very close to a post-IRCAM/spectralist palette (G  rard Grisey is even referenced in the booklet-notes), that doesn't somehow matter. Rosenberger's nine, what to call them – parts? layers? strata? – are heard folding and melting through each other, Kate Soper's dapper part-sung, part-spoken handling of the text lending a further coating of commentary. The jittery, open-ended solo piano piece *torsion* ends the cycle with a mid-point cadenza. Start with an interlude and it's only proper you should end at the middle. **Philip Clark**

## Schubert

String Quartets – No 10, D87; No 15, D887

Casals Quartet

Harmonia Mundi © HMC90 2121 (72' • DDD)



HM's Spanish quartet with Schubert aged 16 and 29

It might have been a terrifying set of hurdles in its time; but if today's quartets are not awed by the technical demands of Schubert's last string quartet, D887, they nevertheless cannot be

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detached from the friction generated through unnerving power and vibrant passion. Cuarteto Casals is not, meeting force head on in the first movement, certainly *Allegro* though not tempered by the call for *molto moderato* as well. Implacable drive is uppermost, dynamic gradations are wide, but responses to other expressive possibilities are understated. There is a measure of objectivity to the keenly rhythmic playing which even extends to the slow movement; yet the clarity of their texture, stark in tonal differentiation and far from diffused in conception, imparts a strangely provocative potency to the music. The Casals' singular attachment isn't in question. Nor is that of the Artemis and Belcea Quartets, equally singular in their own interpretations of a critical, even pivotal work of all-consuming intensity.

Nothing ingratiating here; but Schubert at 29 was radically different from the 16-year-old who composed D87, assured in both charm and depth of feeling. It follows classical traditions even to specifying (in the first edition) that both parts of the *Scherzo* be repeated after the Trio. The Casals repeat only the first, the Yggdrasil neither. That aside, these musicians shape the lines to reflect both poetry and youthful spirit. The Casals rightly scale down their steely resolve that paid dividends in D887 but prefer detachment to ardour, particularly in the slow movement. **Nalen Anthoni**

D887 – selected comparisons:

Artemis Qt (8/12) (VIRG) 602512-2

Belcea Qt (12/09) (EMI) 967025-2

D87 – selected comparison:

Yggdrasil Qt (4/03) (BIS) BIS-CD1201

## Shostakovich

String Quartets – No 3, Op 73; No 4, Op 83;  
No 7, Op 108

**Meta4**

Hänssler Classic © CD98 644 (72' • DDD)



**First Shostakovich on disc for Moscow Competition winners**

In 2004, early in their quartet career, these Finnish musicians won the Shostakovich Quartet Competition in Moscow, with a special prize for the best interpretation of a Shostakovich quartet. Such accolades do not always signify as much they might but in this case they seem perfectly understandable.

Unlike most of their peers, Meta4 have found their way to the particular world of musicality that Shostakovich inhabits – one where characters and states of mind are fragile and permeable, where understatement and trenchancy are equally important and where insinuation is often more productive than open declaration. Listen to the highly contrapuntal central section of the first movement of the Third Quartet and marvel at the range and precision of colour and articulation, all in

response to the surface of the music but at the same time subordinated to the overall flow. At the other extreme, hear the daring emotional blankness these players discover in the central *Lento* of No 7. Nor do they miss a trick in the more demonstrative movements, as in the sheer cussedness of the second movement of No 3, the headlong rush of the *scherzo* or the nagging persistence of the third movement of No 4.

I suppose I have heard more hush and heartbreak in some of the slower passages – more wispiness in the finale of No 3, more questioning in the later stages of No 7. But these really are no more than personal preferences. More importantly, I'm not sure I've ever heard the opening folk-like *Allegretto* of No 4 more subtly explored, and this is cunningly balanced by the strategical placing of nuance in the finale's klezmer-ish passages.

For me the acoustic is fractionally on the dry side of ideal and the booklet-notes are more than fractionally on the self-indulgent side. Never mind. Shostakovich quartet recordings come and go. This one is on my relatively short list of those that should stay. **David Fanning**

## Weinberg

'String Quartets, Vol 6'

String Quartets – No 2, Op 3/145;

No 12, Op 103; No 17, Op 146

**Danel Quartet**

CPO © CPO777 587-2 (75' • DDD)



**Final volume in the Danel's complete Weinberg series**

Since forming in 1991, the Quatuor Danel has made a particular study of Weinberg and this disc is the final volume in a complete survey of his string quartets. It is, therefore, a particular joy that they play with such insight, as well as accuracy and homogeneity of tone and ensemble. There is no hint of the victim in this music (whether or not the overarching mood happens to be positive), as you can hear in the work of many composers who lived through decades of constant, aggressive political change. Instead, it is imbued with a sense of pride in how greatness manages to flourish above all.

Rather than record each of the 17 quartets in sequence, the Danels have ordered each disc as a career-spanning spread, by which policy this volume should be particularly representative as it includes one of Weinberg's earliest (No 2, written in 1939, although revised in 1986) alongside the last, from 1986. That Weinberg's reluctance to display any political bias brings such an innocent optimism and purity to his work is sensitively respected by the Danels, who never open out the tone into something unnecessarily thickset. (This can be a bit at odds with the audible heavy breathing at times, which is only ever really acceptable as a backdrop to music that could be described as

## GRAMOPHONE *Archive*

### Shostakovich String Quartets

Three quartets who came before Meta4 and how Gramophone rated them



**MAY 1973**

**Shostakovich** String Quartets –

No 4, Op 83; No 9, Op 117

**Dartington Quartet**

Saydisc Amon Ra ● SAR1 (£2.00)

The Dartington Quartet are known for their outstanding broadcasts of Haydn and their advocacy of modern music: they have recorded Lutyens's Sixth Quartet for Argo (8/65). These are sound, well-prepared performances that are thoroughly musical and well shaped but missing the last ounce of poetry. The ending of the Fourth Quartet, for instance, sounds relatively earthbound by comparison with the old version by the Beethoven Quartet recording (Melodiya – now deleted). The recorded sound has plenty of body and definition though the acoustic could with advantage have been more ample. Their *planissimo* tone does not always register as softly as it might had the balance been slightly more distant though I suspect that the dynamic range of their playing is not as wide as it could be.

*Robert Layton*



**FEBRUARY 1981**

**Shostakovich** String Quartets – complete  
**Fitzwilliam Quartet**

Decca (M) 7 ● D188D7

The Fitzwilliam Quartet are the first to offer a complete cycle of these works on record as a single set. It is possible to observe an occasional heaviness and lack of fantasy in their playing – for example, in the first movement of No 1, and also at the start of No 9, where it seems as if the players are already too strongly under the spell of the tensions to come. But such moments are rare; the Fitzwilliam performances are in no sense monotonous or inflexible, and the recorded sound is splendidly consistent and life-like. *Arnold Whittall*



**JUNE 1990**

**Shostakovich** String Quartets –

No 1, Op 49; No 4, Op 83

**Brodsky Quartet**

Teldec © 246 009-2 (72' • DDD)

In April last year I said that I couldn't see the Fitzwilliam Quartet's Decca account of Shostakovich's Third Quartet being easily excelled. Well, the Brodsky have equalled it, at any rate, and I am not at all sure that in at least one respect they have not surpassed it. What emerges most clearly from direct comparison is the strength of the Brodsky's lyricism. The Fitzwilliam are more likely to phrase lyrical ideas with tenderness or fragility, which can be most affecting, but the Brodsky's way, without ever inflating the music unduly, emphasises its stoicism. *Michael Oliver*

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Anne Schwanewilms



Wiener Musikverein  
Missa Solemnis

Friedrich Haider



Slovak National Theatre  
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more lugubrious.) Instead they encourage the listener to follow the change from a certain naivety in the early examples to a more wry outlook at the end of his life. They also manage with great control the slow thematic development to which Weinberg was partial, as they do his greatly varied melody, which can range from the expansively beautiful to the reedily spooky. **Caroline Gill**

## Zelenka

Sonatas, ZWV181 – No 3; No 5; No 6.

Simphonie a 8 concertanti, ZWV189 – Andante

Ensemble Marsyas with **Monica Huggett** vn

Linn ⑤ CKD415 (50' • DDD/DSD)



### Zelenka revival arrives at the chamber works

These six exuberantly virtuoso sonatas for two oboes, bassoon and continuo are the works that brought Zelenka into our modern-day lives in the early 1970s, when Heinz Holliger, Maurice Bourgue and Klaus Thunemann wowed listeners with their dazzling premiere recording (Archiv, 10/74). That was on modern instruments, relieving some of the technical difficulties posed by this unforgivingly athletic and stamina-sapping music, and it is perhaps not surprising that period players have been a touch wary of entering the field. There are commendable versions from period oboe doyens Paul Dombrecht and Marcel Poncele (Accent, 3/89) and Ensemble Zefiro (Auvidis, 6/94 and 2/96); but in 1999 the scenery was sufficiently unchanged for Holliger and Co to record them again (ECM, 8/99). Now here is a disc offering three of those sonatas from a bright young group of wind players based in Edinburgh but with a multinational line-up.

There is highly capable playing, with expert tuning, smooth lines, and techniques apparently taxed only by the quickfire repeated notes in Sonata No 6. The sound is also wonderfully clear and well balanced, not just between the three winds but also between them and the springy continuo combination of harpsichord and theorbo. In the Vivaldian Sonata No 5 I wanted a bit more stamping energy and there could have been some stronger long-range shaping to match the impressive build through the third movement of Sonata No 6; but in Sonata No 3, where a violin replaces one of the oboes, Monica Huggett arrives to lend richness and warmth of line. Three sonatas do not make a long CD and Marsyas add at the end a lightly scored inner movement of Zelenka's one and only *Simphonie*. Ending on a half-close is odd – but let's hope it is meant to point the way to a second volume. **Lindsay Kemp**

## '25 Years DIEM'

'Electronic Music Produced at DIEM 1987-2012'

**Alsted** Zu versuchen, die Fragen **Band Ane** Hyper

**Motel Bergström-Nielsen** Omdrejninger II

**S Forsberg** Homework **Fuzzy** Electric Gardens and their Surroundings **Halfdan E/Turèll** Intro (Team Trash) **H Hansen** Passaics Monumenter

**JR Kirkegaard** 802 **Lunding** On Learning How to

Kill **Nørgård** Årsfrise-91 (exc) **Nyvang** Collage IV,

Corona **Olesen/Riis** Prim x **Puzzleweasel/Devine**

**Mad Bonce** **Rothman** Southwest Sky **W Siegel**

Tunnel Vision **Simonsen** Oktav III **Svin** 7 cirkler I

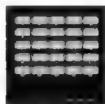
1 matrix **Teller** Sparklings **Tjørnhøj-Thomsen**

**Lauria** **Vectral** AC-3

Electronic works produced at the

**Danish Institute of Electronic Music**

Decapo ⑧ ② 8 226559/60 (138' • DDD)



### Twenty-five years of Danish electronic music

Whether by accident or intentioned design, this anthology of electronic composition created at the Danish Institute of Electronic Music between 1987 and 2012 follows on the chronological coat-tails of the Ljud label's 2009 release 'Pioneers: The Beginning of Danish Electronic Music'. Ljud's booklet-notes began by fessing up that Denmark's role in the development of electronic music per se was negligible: 'However, this gave us the opportunity of taking advantage of experiences, both good and bad, from other countries.'

This new set is prefaced with a proto-Rumsfeldian quote from Dan Quayle: 'The question is whether we're going forward to tomorrow or whether we're going to go past to the – to the back!'

That is indeed the question creative musicians face during these troubled times for our art, these recent pieces offering up a reminder of what remains an integral problem of electronic music culture. Until recently, when suddenly anyone could carry an electronic music studio inside their Mac, being an electronic composer meant tying yourself to a studio, which meant institutionalisation and, for many, creative death.

Is it revealing that Per Nørgård's *Årsfrise-91* (1991), its stew of microtonally smudged vocal lines nicely on the boil alongside environmental sounds, makes other pieces here sound like drab patterning? Only in that Nørgård is a composer first who, in this instance, happens to be expressing himself via electronics. Jonas R Kirkegaard's geeky programme-note is a love letter to the Yamaha DX synth, the problem being that his note is considerably more charming than his piece, *802* (2012), with its tired rehash of club beats. Vectral's (the performing persona of Søren Lyngsø Knudsen) *AC-3* (2008) resorts to that old anthemic voices-plus-electronic gloss trick: it flops.

Line Tjørnhøj-Thomsen's *Lauria* (1998) uses electronics to take us far inside the contours of her throaty vocal chords; an unexpectedly voyeuristic intimate voyage. Introducing her *Hyper Motel* (2011), Band Ane proves that

obsessing over equipment might well be a boy thing. As workaday triadic sequences slide and morph into new shapes, melting like ice cream, she says 'How the work is made is not that important'. Another high point is Daniel Rothman (the only non-Dane here: he was artist-in-residence in 1998) whose *Southwest Sky*, inspired by the flatness of the Danish landscape, carves a flat but rounded, still but busy soundscape from the overtones of an oboe. Like Nørgård's piece, an intelligently conceived musical idea is served by technology. **Philip Clark**

## 'Last Spring'

Arrangements, compositions and improvisations over traditional themes and melodies/works by **Haavie**, **Myhren**, **Grieg**, **Søraas Snr**, **Bull**, **Svendsen** and **Mortensen** and **Brahms**

**Henning Kraggerud** vn/va/va *concorda*

**Bugge Wesseltoft** pf

ACT ⑤ ACT9526-2 (73' • DDD)



### Kraggerud joins Wesseltoft for traditional music exploration

Norwegian violinist Henning Kraggerud and pianist Bugge Wesseltoft have teamed up to produce a recording of, at times, quite delicate and compelling beauty. The basis for many of the 16 tracks contained on 'Last Spring' is traditional music, whose melodies serve as a foundation for Wesseltoft and Kraggerud's own arrangements and re-compositions. Sometimes they draw upon classical melodies and Baroque archetypes, such as in the closing 'Wiegenlied', which quotes from Brahms, or the well-known theme for variations 'La folia'. Rarely do their extemporisations get in the way of the music's essential features, however. Excess layers of decoration and elaboration are peeled away to reveal sound at its most pure and crystalline, such as in the breathtakingly simple 'Lilja' or the barren, desolate beauty of 'Til Ungdommen'.

One is inevitably drawn to the still, elemental nature of the Norwegian landscape here, as the album's title suggests. But maybe a sign of the true quality of 'Last Spring' lies in the fact that – unlike a lot of so-called new age or ambient music, with which it shares certain surface features such as quiet dynamics and slow tempi – it can be experienced and appreciated on a number of different levels. One can listen to it either in a focused, engaged way or in a more passive, detached manner.

Much of this is down not so much to Wesseltoft and Kraggerud's arrangements but to how they perform them. Kraggerud's precise but delicate articulation and resonant tone (especially on the viola and viola *concorda*) is equally matched by Wesseltoft's chordal voicings and nuanced piano-playing. It's a musical relationship that has yielded a quietly rich harvest. **Pwyll ap Siôn**

# Instrumental



**Bryce Morrison reviews Prokofiev sonatas from Boris Giltburg:**

*'When you hear Giltburg in the final pages, you can only discard pen and paper and listen in awe and disbelief'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 89**



**Jeremy Nicholas reviews French repertoire from Stephen Hough:**

*'Hough's heart-catching melancholy put me in mind of Cherkassy. I can offer no higher praise'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 93**

## JS Bach

**'Open Goldberg Variations'**  
Goldberg Variations, BWV988

Kimiko Ishizaka *pf*

Available for free download from  
[opengoldbergvariations.org](http://opengoldbergvariations.org)



**Ishizaka's Goldberg Variations offered as a free download**

In 2011 Robert Douglass launched a kick-starter campaign to fund a studio recording of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* featuring his pianist wife, Kimiko Ishizaka, along with a new engraving of the score, both available as a free download under the Creative Commons 'no rights reserved' public domain law.

Ishizaka's interpretation is characterised by straightforward musicianship, immaculate technical aplomb and a warm, beautifully modulated sonority. In contrast to the rigorous tempo relationships Glenn Gould applied to his iconic 1981 version, Ishizaka is more inclined to treat the variations as distinct entities, and she usually inserts a brief pause between each. Although she is conservative with regard to ornaments and embellishments, she achieves sufficient expressive variety through varied articulations and subtle scaling of dynamics to keep the music afloat without drawing attention to herself. Notice, for instance, how her understated *legato* phrasing at the outset of Var 24 (the canon at the octave) gradually opens up, or the sense of air between the notes distinguishing Var 11's imitative writing. Counterpoint passes back and forth between the hands in a conversational and judiciously balanced manner, while a strong lyrical impulse informs the cross-handed variations' rapid, bravura passages (Vars 5 and 19, for example). Ishizaka's restrained and concentrated way with slow minor-key variations (Vars 15, 21 and 25) lets the music's agonising harmonic tension speak softly for itself. A few quibbles: Var 28's trills grow increasingly loud and heavy (although Ishizaka's basic tempo remains constant), while Var 29's toccata-like patterns are too held back and blandly executed when they ought to let rip with unfettered joy and bravura, à la Angela Hewitt or Rosalyn Tureck. All told, this

recording (with all repeats intact save for the *Aria da capo*) merits hard-disk space on your computer or digital music player. It sounds equally fine in MP3 format or 24bit/44kbps WAV files and better still when you expand the surround-sound 24bit/96kbps FLAC files for multichannel playback. However you choose to download Ishizaka's *Goldberg Variations*, the price is right. **Jed Distler**

## Beethoven

**'Piano Sonatas, Vol 2'**

Piano Sonatas - No 15, 'Pastoral', Op 28; No 16, Op 30 No 1; No 17, 'Tempest', Op 30 No 2; No 18, Op 31 No 3; No 19, Op 49 No 1; No 20, Op 49 No 2; No 21, 'Waldstein', Op 53; No 22, Op 54; No 23, 'Appassionata', Op 57; No 24, Op 78; No 25, Op 79; No 28, Op 101

François-Frédéric Guy *pf*

Zig-Zag Territoires ® © ZYT304 (3h 33' • DDD)



**Second box-set in Guy's Beethoven sonata traversal**

Here is an antidote to the identikit Beethoven, to sonatas (and even cycles) recorded merely because an artist will sell. There's nothing mass-market about François-Frédéric Guy, a pianist who has made Beethoven something of a speciality from the outset of his career and who has never been one to toe the line, as anyone who has heard him live will attest.

Unlike Bavouzet's recently commenced cycle – superb, though temperamentally quite different from this one – Guy has made a point of mixing things up, of emphasising contrast rather than chronological progression. It's Beethoven the master dramatist that comes across most clearly, to particularly compelling effect in the mighty coda of the *Appassionata*, in the *Adagio* of the *Tempest*, which he imbues with unblinking intensity, and in the opening movement of the *Waldstein*.

The acoustic takes a bit of getting used to: it can be somewhat unanalytical and there were times (in the first movement of Op 31 No 1, for instance) when I wasn't certain whether Guy was being quite free with the pedal or it was an acoustic trick of the ear. I'm still not sure. The *Andante* of Op 79 is another high point, Guy unafraid to be quite free in his approach but sounding utterly convincing. I was less sure

about the sonata's opening movement: there's tensile strength in spades but he lacks the contrasting delicacy that Goode, Kovacevich and Lewis reveal.

Frequently, in his search for the rhetoric of the music, Guy allows himself a certain amount of rhythmic freedom. In the opening movement of Op 101 he perhaps overdoes it: Gilels and Solomon are closer to the letter of the score and simultaneously sound more natural and authoritative. The same is true of the *Langsam* third movement: Solomon is relatively swift, Gilels produces a rapturously honeyed sound. Guy, on the other hand, is at his most convincing in the finale.

There are moments in the earlier sonatas, too, where Guy's search for the extremes in Beethoven can lead to overly slow tempi. The *Adagio grazioso* of Op 31 No 1 is a case in point: his tempo is so spacious that he struggles to make the line sing, something Annie Fischer does with finesse and sureness, shaving nearly three minutes off Guy's timing. It's not the only approach, though, Brendel instead pointing up the movement's Haydnesque qualities. In the opening *Andante* of Op 49 No 1 Guy is faster than in his earlier recording and all the better for it.

A mixed bag, then, but thoroughly thought-provoking. Guy's approach is refreshing in its directness and honesty and – at his best – he is a highly persuasive Beethovenian. **Harriet Smith**

*Pf Sons – selected comparisons:*

Goode (3/94) (NONE) 7559 79328-2

Kovacevich (2/04) (EMI) 562700-2

Lewis (9/05, 12/06, 11/07, 6/08\*) (HARM) HMX290 1902/11

Brendel (1990s cycle) (PHIL) 446 909-2PH10

Op 31 No 1 & 78 – selected comparison:

A Fischer (HUNG) HCD31632

Op 49 No 1 – selected comparison:

Guy (11/06) (NAIV) V5023

Op 101 – selected comparisons:

Solomon (7/93) (EMI) 764708-2

Gilels (DG) 463 639-2GOR

## Beethoven

**'Piano Sonatas, Vol 3 – The Final Trilogy'**

Piano Sonatas - No 24, Op 78; No 30, Op 109; No 31, Op 110; No 32, Op 111

Martin Roscoe *pf*

Deux-Elles ® DXL1163 (74' • DDD)



Contrast rather than chronology: François-Frédéric Guy's second box of Beethoven



### Late sonatas and final volume in Roscoe's Beethoven cycle

How are Beethoven's markings in the *Arietta* of Op 111 meant to be interpreted? On the one hand he specifies a constant tempo; on the other he appears to speed up for Vars 2 and 3. Most pianists play the notes faster but stick to the basic pulse. Others maintain a steady pace by adjusting differently to the change of time signature and matching tempo to pulse. Christoph Eschenbach and John Lill pull this off to tremendous effect. Martin Roscoe prefers the first option, unsettling the benedictory calm he creates so strikingly in the theme and Var 1.

It's a discrepancy that stands out because he is so often percipient – in his awareness of harmonic foundations trenchantly expressed through an unambiguous left hand, instantly noticeable in the opening of Op 78; or stealing into Op 109, the rhythm winsomely flexible, the main tempo perhaps not quite *Vivace ma non troppo* yet finely integrated with the two interludes, *Adagio espressivo*; or in the reposeful return of the theme to round out the finale.

Roscoe senses the schematic but form always yields to musicianship, supremely so in Op 110, as he reaches out to a spirituality behind the creative force. The nodal point is probably the

third-movement *Adagio ma non troppo*, ethereally withdrawn. Roscoe's grasp of plaintive mourning through shrouded tone in *una corda* and the ultimate release of new life founded in fugal inversion is indescribable. Experience the message in this marvellously wrought interpretation. **Nalen Anthoni**

*Opp 109-111 – selected comparisons:*  
Lill (6/81<sup>st</sup>, 1/82<sup>nd</sup>) (ASV) CDQS6064  
Eschenbach (EMI) 585499-2

### Brahms

Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel, Op 24. Sixteen Waltzes, Op 39. Six Pieces, Op 118

**Leon McCawley** pf  
Somm Céleste © SOMMCD0116 (68' • DDD)



### Handel Variations from the former Leeds prizewinner

In Brahms's *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel*, should a pianist zero in on the overall grand design and try to build cumulative momentum? Or, instead, focus on the intricate contrapuntal textures and subtle rhythmic felicities? Or perhaps both? Leon McCawley is less of a big-picture person than a detail maven. Cases in point: the affectionate accentuations and inner voices in Var 2, the strict adherence to Brahms's dynamics and articulations in

Vars 7 and 10 (easier said than done), Var 16's carefully voiced canons and the beautiful, bell-like sonorities he obtains in Var 22. A few miscalculations lead him to fall short of the reference standards set by Perahia, Ohlsson and Arrau's strikingly different interpretations. He softens the rhythmic build in Vars 23 and 24 by slightly slowing down for the latter, while Var 3's off-beat right-hand accents throw Brahms's intended phrasing off-kilter and Var 13 moves too fast to allow the triplets and quintuplet figures to speak comfortably.

McCawley lets his hair down in the Waltzes, allowing himself less leeway than the relatively rhapsodic Cédric Tiberghien and Gerhard Oppitz, yet retaining plenty of dynamism and passion. However, the Op 118 Piano Pieces showcase McCawley's most consistent and inspired playing. Listen, for example, to the A major Intermezzo's conversationally phrased outer sections, the F minor Intermezzo's fascinating interplay between the hands (many pianists maintain the textures at a uniform level) and how the E flat minor Intermezzo's registral extremes seem to emanate from two very different instruments. Clearly McCawley's artistry is evolving. **Jed Distler**

*Handel Vars – selected comparisons:*  
Ohlsson (11/10) (HYPER) CDA67777  
Perahia (2/11) (SONY) 88697 72725-2

Arrau (HANS) CD93 703  
 Waltzes – selected comparisons:  
 Oppitz (10/90) (RCA) RD69246  
 Tiberghien (HARM) HMC90 215

## Chopin

Piano Concerto No 2, Op 21<sup>a</sup>. Piano Sonata No 2, Op 35. Ballade No 4, Op 52. Mazurka No 13, Op 17 No 4. Waltz No 7, Op 64 No 2

Khatia Buniatishvili *pf*

Orchestre de Paris / Paavo Järvi

Sony Classical © 88691 97129-2 (71' • DDD)



### Maverick pianist moves from Liszt to Chopin

Khatia Buniatishvili's all-Liszt debut disc for Sony (9/11) divided opinion. Its successor will not, I think, raise hackles to quite the same extent, though a few eyebrows will certainly be raised...not least over the fetching picture of Ms Buniatishvili on the cover. It was never like this in Dame Myra's day.

For some, the opening C sharp minor Waltz is pulled around too much and they will wince at the absence of any repeat, *da capo* or *dal segno* in the Sonata's first movement. The *Scherzo*'s ending is perfectly graded to make the Funeral March its natural outcome. In the restatement of the main subject after the Trio, Buniatishvili ignores Chopin's dynamics, making it one huge arc from *pp* to *ff* to *pp*, an idea I found totally convincing. At 1'16", the finale is among the quickest and best articulated on disc: Gilels an exceptional 1'14"; Rachmaninov and Argerich 1'26". The Ballade is judiciously paced and phrased until the *stretto* (8'50") and the final pages, which fly past in a desperate blur.

I wish artists would mix solo and orchestral works more often. Here, though, the Second Concerto is disappointing, as much as for Järvi's dutiful accompaniment as Buniatishvili's lack of poise and excessive speed, especially in the last movement, which lasts a full minute less than the average. Of five recordings selected at random, only Rubinstein (with Barbirolli in 1931) is faster (7'29") than Buniatishvili's 7'33"; but, whereas Rubinstein seems to have all the time in the world, one is only aware of how much Buniatishvili is forcing the pace. **Jeremy Nicholas**

## Chopin • Liszt • Schumann

Chopin Ballade No 43, Op 52. Andante spianato and Grande polonaise brillante Liszt Ballade No 2, S171. Tristan und Isolde - Liebestod, S447

Schumann Theme and Variations on the Name 'Abegg', Op 1

Alexandra Dariescu *pf*

Champs Hill © CHRCDO35 (53' • DDD)



### Solo debut from Romanian-born, RNCM-trained Dariescu

Alexandra Dariescu's solo debut CD offers frequently recorded Romantic repertoire in performances that are generally refined, rounded off but rarely dramatic enough when the music requires it. Her curvy phrase taperings at the outset of Schumann's *Abegg* Variations foreshadow the pretty yet soft-grained movements to come: where is the backbone and scintillation one hears from Richter and Haskil? Liszt's B minor Ballade has fine moments, such as the carefully controlled left-hand chromatic scales in the first section and the closing pages' lyrical animation. However, Dariescu undersells the heroic, virtuoso moments by not keeping the march rhythms clear and steady.

She also reduces the chromatic inner lines in the Wagner/Liszt Liebestod to watery filler, although the seemingly endless *tremolos* benefit from subtle shifts in touch and voicing. Dariescu's phrase-end *ritards* in Chopin's *Grande polonaise* are as generic and predictable as her seamlessly even and uneventfully square *Andante spianato*. Much of her Fourth Ballade is also uniform and dynamically restricted. The engineering's mellow resonance casts a further haze over the proceedings. **Jed Distler**

## Chopin

Complete Mazurkas

Russell Sherman *pf*

Avie © 2 AV2262 (126' • DDD)



### The American teacher, author and pianist plays the Mazurkas

The Mazurka was a form that engaged Chopin from his teenage years until his death. There are some 62 in all, if one includes doubtful and spurious works. Capturing their essence can be elusive, a task made more difficult when presented, as they were never intended to be, en bloc. These jewel-like miniature tone-poems are better savoured in groups of four or five at a time. That said, the greatest 'complete Chopin mazurka' recordings can be addictive. Once you've tasted one, you can't stop. Sadly, this newcomer is not among them.

I sat through the first five or six of Russell Sherman's traversal scratching my head, trying to work out why none sounded quite right. The sustaining pedal is constantly depressed (or half depressed) together with the *una corda*, enveloping each successive phrase in a kind of haze; frequently I found it hard to identify the basic pulse, the aural equivalent of someone trying to cross a busy road blindfolded; there are sudden *crescendos* and *diminuendos*, a *rubato* that invades the musical narrative... Sherman has an undeniable affection for the Mazurkas but sitting through all 51 on offer was, I'm afraid, a wearisome experience. The booklet, too, with its talk of 'bourdon fifths and scalar, fujarka-like melodic

patterns' had me gasping for air. For this listener, Rubinstein in 1938 and Ohlsson in 1998 (now on a complete Chopin set from Hyperion) remain the benchmark.

**Jeremy Nicholas**

Selected comparisons:

Rubinstein (RCA) 09026 63050-2

Ohlsson (HYPERION) CDS44351/66

## Lovett

Berceuse. Beyond (and Below). Interlude. Ishtar's Gate. Liquid Daydream. A Melancholic Waltz. On the Run. Perpetuum mobile. Le petit prince. Raindrops on Mars. Tokyo Rush

Anne Lovett *pf*

DMV © DMV101 (57' • DDD)



### A little light music from the pen and piano of Anne Lovett

Do you fancy easy-listening piano fare that's just as virtuosic yet less cheesy than your average Richard Clayderman or Yanni opus? Or a new-age disc that's as easy to follow as George Winston, while offering more virtuosic grit? How about a more energised version of Clara Ponty? If your answer is yes, then you'll enjoy composer/pianist Anne Lovett's music. Lest you worry that the opening selection, *Raindrops on Mars*, will evoke spooky science fiction scenarios, fear not; it's just an innocuous minor-key repeated-note study that could well have been composed by Liadov or Chaminade.

Fast-moving pentatonic fifths define *Tokyo Rush*, gently arpeggiated Bill Evans-y major and minor seventh chords characterise *Ishtar's Gate*, while the title-track wears its Erik Satie-meets-David Grusin heart on its sleeve. *Interlude* mainly concerns slow-moving chords that superficially evoke 'La cathédrale engloutie'. Another Debussy masterpiece, 'Hommage à Rameau', seems to inform the first section of Lovett's *A Melancholic Waltz*. The toccata-like pattern employed throughout *Perpetuum mobile* wears thin very quickly. However, Lovett's austere unfolding of the consistently repeating figurations in *Berceuse* transcend their clichéd origin. While Lovett's music poses no problems and offers no challenges, one must respect her polished, nuanced, immaculately controlled and beautifully reproduced pianism.

**Jed Distler**

## Merkel

'Organ Works, Vol 3'

Sonatas – No 4, Op 115; No 5, Op 118; No 6, Op 137.

Postludium, Op 44 No 3. Chorale Study, Op 116.

Fantasie, Op 176

Halgeir Schiager *org*

Simax © PSC1275 (77' • DDD)

Played on the Carl August Buchholz organ at the St Marienkirche, Barth, Germany



### Third disc in Simax's Merkel organ works traversal

Before the election of the current German Chancellor, the name Merkel was, so far as British organists were concerned, synonymous with dull and worthy music found in albums of teaching pieces or general church voluntaries. Gustav Merkel's outpourings (and there were an awful lot of them) were useful to hone hand/feet co-ordination and to supply the background music for a congregation's pre-service chatter.

I'm not sure that Halgeir Schiager's programme of hefty pieces – the third of his plod through Merkel's complete organ output – convinces us that these are the works of an unrecognised master, and certainly the organ of the Marienkirche does little to promote what charms the music might possess, sounding often as if it is straining for the last of its breath, not helped by Schiager's propensity for pulling out lots of stops lots of the time. The Fourth and Fifth Sonatas come across as stodgy and there is little to savour in either the short *Postludium* or the lengthy *Fantasie*.

What musical interest there is comes with the chorale-based pieces. Not one of music's most gifted melodists, Merkel's solid and dependable compositional invention (a bit like Mendelssohn minus the touch of genius) begins to blossom with the focus of a coherent tune. The 10 variations on *Wer nur den lieben Gott* are well-crafted miniatures which coalesce into a most satisfying whole, while the Sixth Sonata, showing strong Mendelssohnian leanings, is based on *Aus tiefer und Wachet auf*, this latter providing moments that come dangerously close to being quite exciting. **Marc Rochester**

### Nebra

'Desde el silencio / From Silence'

Keyboard Sonatas and Toccatas

Moisés Fernández Via pf

Verso © VRS2118 (60' • DDD)



### Scarlatti Competition winner advocates countryman Nebra

Writing on José de Nebra (1702–68), Moisés Fernández Via, a young Spanish pianist, laments the incomprehensible neglect of 'the most important Spanish composer of the second half of the 18th century'. This is hardly a case of hyperbole for Nebra, whose work is a clear if highly idiosyncratic prophecy of Scarlatti and who wrote keyboard music (prominent among operas and zarzuelas) which brims over with zest and invention.

Oddly emerging from silence (tr 1), the F minor Sonata is alive with startling twists and turns of phrase, while *Movimiento* in C minor is fiercely virtuosic. In magical contrast, the *Grave* on the eighth tone is serenely contemplative,

and the incomplete *Grave* in D minor offers a gentle and assuaging resolution of so much hyperactivity. All this is played with a coruscating verve and charm by Moisés Fernández Via and it would be impossible to imagine a more persuasive case being made for such a distinctive repertoire. Several pieces are recorded for the first time on the piano and Via gives us a free improvisation to end the concluding *Grave*. The recording is as crystalline as the playing and I would urge all lovers of music which offers one surprise after another to revel and explore. **Bryce Morrison**

### Prokofiev

'War Sonatas'

Piano Sonatas – No 6, Op 82; No 7, Op 83; No 8, Op 84

Boris Giltburg pf

Orchid © ORC100023 (74' • DDD)



### Russian Giltburg takes on Prokofiev's War Sonatas

Putting my head above a parapet, I have to say that these performances of Prokofiev's three 'War' Sonatas (for Sviatoslav Richter music that evokes 'a world without reason or equilibrium') eclipse all others on record – even those tirelessly and justifiably celebrated performances by Richter and Gilels. Boris Giltburg is a young Russian but Israeli-based pianist whose blistering, all-inclusive technique allows him to range from the merest whisper (try the tolling funeral bells at the close of the Seventh Sonata's central *Andante caloroso*) to an elemental uproar that never degenerates into coarseness or mere violence. The Sixth Sonata's opening call to arms could hardly be more bellicose or articulate and the stress is very much on an uncompromising bleakness where everything is held in an iron grip.

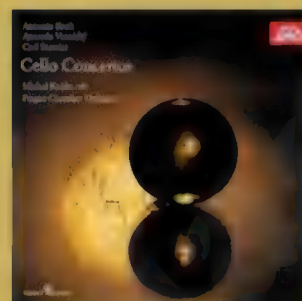
There may be little time for passing whimsy in the same sonata's *Allegretto*, yet listening to Giltburg in the slow movements of all three Sonatas is to hear a pianist as acutely sensitive to voicing and texture as he is heaven-storming. And here, too, is a flawless sense of Prokofiev's mockery of an accessible style dear to the blinkered Russian authorities of his time. Tempi are on the wild side (Giltburg writes his own defence of his pace in the *Precipitato* 7/8 drumbeat finale of Sonata No 7, a far cry from Horowitz's and Richter's more measured view). Everything coheres in the astral wanderings of the Eighth Sonata's first movement and when you hear Giltburg in the final pages of both this movement and the finale, with its suggestion of the last trump, you can only discard pen and paper and listen in awe and disbelief. The recordings are excellent and there is an illuminating essay by the pianist himself, where he writes of 'war...in your face, marching towards you with dead eyes and it is not pleasant.' **Bryce Morrison**



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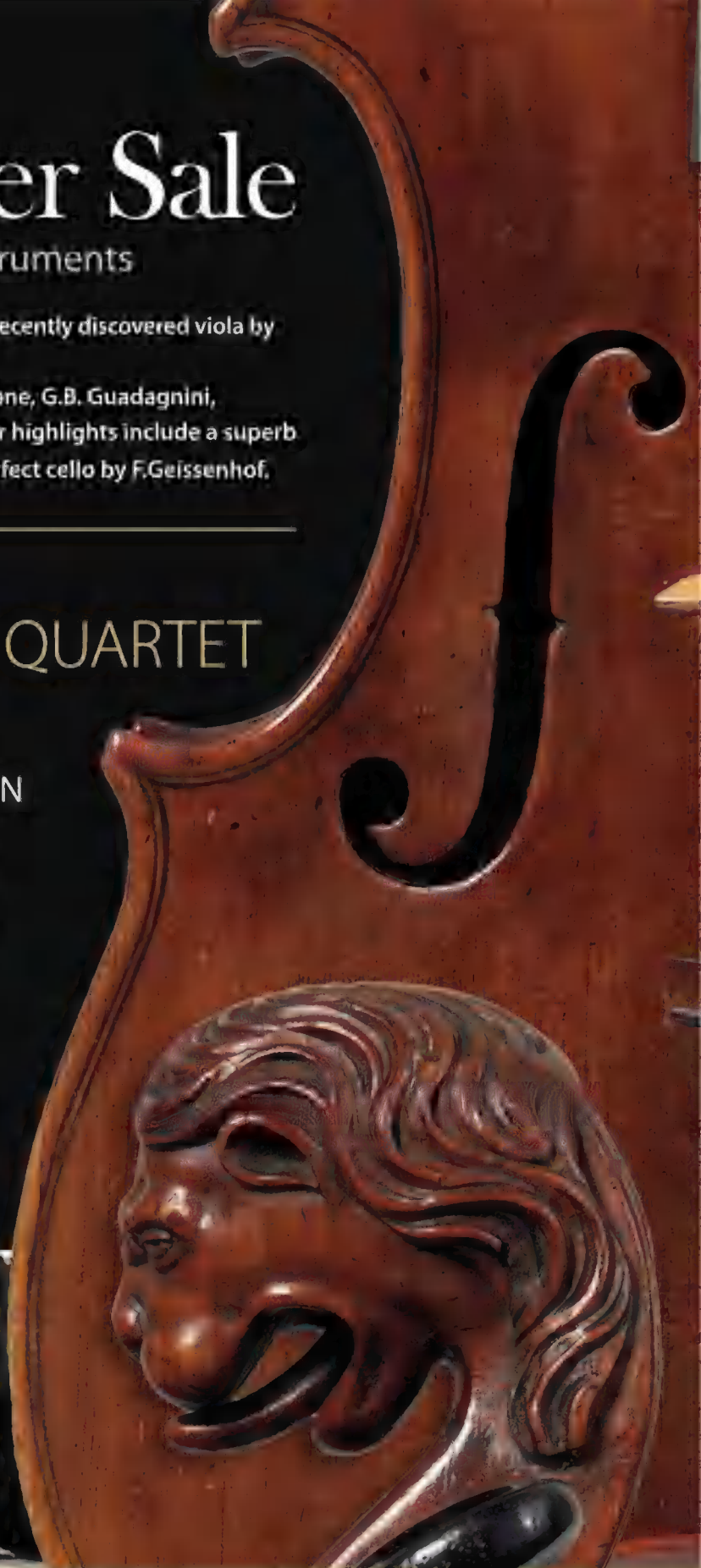
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## Scriabin

'A Tribute to Scriabin'

Danse languide, Op 51 No 4. Deux Danses, Op 73. Deux Poèmes, Op 32. Etrangeté, Op 63 No 2. Etudes, Op 42 - Nos 4 & 5. Piano Sonata No 4, Op 30. Poème ailé, Op 51 No 3. Preludes - Op 11 Nos 11 & 13; Op 16 Nos 1, 3 & 4; Op 22 Nos 1-3; Op 37 Nos 2 & 3; Op 74. Rêverie, Op 49 No 3. Two Pieces, Op 57. Vers la flamme, Op 72. Waltzes - Op 38; Op *posth*

Vladimir Feltsman *pf*

Nimbus Alliance (P) NI6198 (72' • DDD)



### Feltsman in Scriabin's journey from innocence to experience

Stravinsky's awed and baffled question regarding Scriabin - 'Where does he come from and where does he go?' - is hauntingly and magisterially answered by Vladimir Feltsman as he journeys from Op 11 to Op 72, from innocence to experience, from light to darkness. Certainly Scriabin had few hesitations about his identity, saying 'I am God/I am nothing, I am play, I am freedom/I am life, I am the boundary, I am the peak'. And such megalomania is reflected in his delirious and hallucinatory art, a quality faultlessly captured by Feltsman who, taking time off from his beloved Chopin, turns his attention to his extraordinary compatriot.

How he relishes Chopin's influence (though with a Russian twist) in the early Preludes, even when they edge towards the opalescent and obsessive poetry of Scriabin's later years. His performance of the Fourth Sonata ('towards the blue flame') is a marvel of clarity and musicianship; and, in the first of the two *Poèmes*, Op 32, he is lost in reverie, gently musing and mesmeric. More generally, everything is given with a warmth and sincerity that are the reverse of extravagance or self-conscious idiosyncrasy: as an introduction to Scriabin's compulsive genius this disc could hardly be bettered. Finely recorded, Feltsman is in a forgiving mood, qualifying what he describes in his acute and sympathetic notes as the first time 'horror and despair' had been introduced into music, with a final return to first charms - to a waltz written when Scriabin was 13. **Bryce Morrison**

## Tellefsen

'Complete Piano Works'

Jørgen Larsen *pf*

2L (P) 2L80PABD (3h 19' • DTS-HD MA 96kHz/24bit 5.1 & LPCM 192kHz/24bit stereo)



### 2L follows Simax's lead with complete Tellefsen for piano

Yes, that's right: three hours 18 minutes and 38 seconds of music on one disc. That is only one of the unusual aspects of this release. Here

are some others: it is an audio disc playable only on Blu-ray equipment (so are your television speakers as good as those of your sound system?); the case probably won't fit your CD shelving; until earlier this year, very little of Tellefsen's music had ever appeared in any format (cylinder, 78, LP, cassette or CD) yet this is the second recording of his complete solo piano works to appear within months.

You may recall from my review of Simax's four-disc set (1/12) that the Norwegian Thomas Dyke Acland Tellefsen (1823-74) - named, incidentally, after a British politician, Sir Thomas Dyke Acland - studied with Chopin from 1844 to 1847 and took his musical inspiration from him. So, if you wish to investigate the often highly attractive music of this forgotten minor composer, which version do you go for? Like Simax, 2L assigns the entire oeuvre to a single pianist and presents the works in chronological opus order.

Jørgen Larsen is by far the more technically accomplished pianist and adopts beneficially faster tempi for almost all the 53 works on offer, yet Simax's Einar Steen-Nøkleberg is the superior colourist whose playing, despite its inconsistency, has more character. The fourth disc in the Simax set is of Tellefsen's unpublished bits and pieces. Larsen does not include these. On the other hand you can safely live without them. Both have informative booklets. On balance, I'd go for the newcomer.

**Jeremy Nicholas**

## Valentina Lisitsa

'Live at the Royal Albert Hall'

Beethoven Bagatelle, WoO60, 'Für Elise'. Piano Sonata No 14, 'Moonlight', Op 27 No 2 Chopin Nocturnes - No 2, Op 9 No 2; No 8, Op 27 No 2; No 13, Op 48 No 1 Liszt La campanella, S141 No 3. Liebestraum No 3, S541. Un sospiro, S144 No 3 Rachmaninov Etude-tableaux, Op 39 No 6. Preludes - Op 23 No 5; Op 32 Nos 5, 10 & 12 Scriabin Deux Poèmes, Op 32. Etude, Op 42 No 3

Valentina Lisitsa *pf*

Decca (P) 478 4572DH (70' • DDD)

Recorded live, June 19, 2012

Also available on DVD 074 3599DH



### YouTube star's Albert Hall recital issued on disc

Without a word of warning, the Ukrainian-born American-based pianist Valentina Lisitsa has leapfrogged from expert collaborator (she's recorded with violinists Ida Haendel and Hilary Hahn) to headline-grabbing soloist as YouTube's most popular pianist. Sensing a potential cash cow, Decca wasted no time signing Lisitsa to a contract and rushed out her June 2012 Royal Albert Hall debut recital.

The concert's repertoire was predetermined by the audience, who predictably chose short, encore-type fare, with Beethoven's *Moonlight*

## GRAMOPHONE *Archive*

### Complete Tellefsen for piano

From earlier this year, that 'other' complete set of the Norwegian Chopin's piano works



JANUARY 2012

Tellefsen The Complete Works for Solo Piano

Einar Steen-Nøkleberg *pf*

Simax (P) 4 PSC1239 (4h 43' • DDD)

The Norwegian pianist-composer Thomas Tellefsen was a pupil of Chopin in the 1840s - and very much liked to bill himself as such. He writes appealing, well-proportioned short works that one forgets as soon as one has heard them. Simax presents them in strict chronological opus-number order. Many sound like pastiche Chopin, his *Marche funèbre*, Op 16 No 3 laughably so. Struggling to find his own voice, he all too often falls between two stools.

Yet even before the opus numbers climb into double figures, there are glimpses of a composer striking out on his own: *Élégie*, Op 7, written in 1852 in memory of the Swedish Prince Gustav, is a beautiful meditation which includes the chorale 'Wer weiss, wie nahe mir mein Ende', a device Chopin would never have used. Such independence is reflected in his two contemporaneous piano concertos, both worthy of inclusion in Hyperion's Romantic Concerto series had they not already been splendidly recorded by the present pianist. Tellefsen's Sonata (a modest achievement but with an affecting *Adagio* and catchy 6/8 rondo finale), the Six Mazurkas, Op 14, an impressive Grande Polonaise in C sharp minor, Op 18, and other works are well worth hearing.

Just as Tellefsen's muse is uneven in inspiration, so are Einar Steen-Nøkleberg's playing and Simax's sound which, perhaps because the 52 tracks were recorded at different times in 2009, changes focus, sometimes from item to item. Also, the (unnamed make of) modern concert grand on which discs 1-3 are played has a penetrating, resonant bass register which Steen-Nøkleberg is all too happy to exploit. He can be heavy-handed, over-emphasising the down-beat of a fermata or phrase-ending as though he were announcing the conclusion of the piece; frequently he likes to hover at the climax of a phrase before continuing a *tempo*, an exaggerated rubato that can be highly effective but only if used sparingly.

At his best, he turns in some remarkably fine performances, his tonal colouring, flashes of bravura and imagination more pronounced than Hubert Rutkowski on his selection of four titles on Naxos (though I prefer the latter's recorded sound), the kind of musical engagement that comes with a 50-year relationship with the music. The whole project is handsomely presented with an excellent 47-page booklet in Norwegian, French and English. 'I have given my very soul to bring [Tellefsen] into the light in the year 2011', writes the pianist, with the hope that 'these pieces will be played by many a young musician.' **Jeremy Nicholas**

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## Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra

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Tchaikovsky Cycle 1

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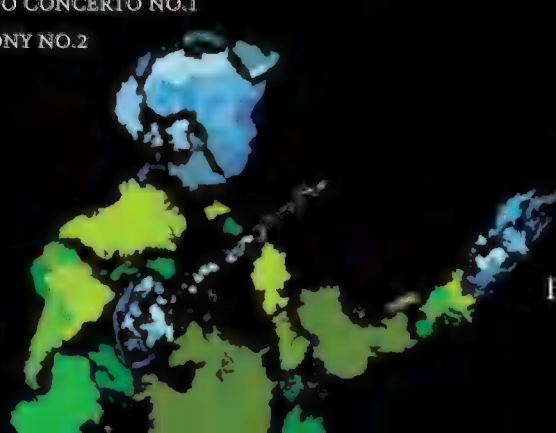
Tchaikovsky Cycle 2

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SYMPHONY NO.5

Tchaikovsky Cycle 3

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Sonata as the centrepiece. Critics love to trash this kind of 'semi-pops' programme, yet Lisitsa often plays beautifully. While her opening salvo, Rachmaninov's G minor Prelude, is rather rushed and glib, the pianist quickly settles down to a direct and eloquent *Für Elise*, followed by a breathtakingly brisk, imaginatively shaded *La campanella*. Her brisk, classically contained Chopin Op 9 No 2 and Op 27 No 2 Nocturnes feature lean, singing lines that speak rather than droop, while a hundred years of accumulated expressive graffiti is purged from Liszt's potentially saccharine *Un sospiro* and *Liebestraum* No 3.

Perhaps it isn't fair to judge Lisitsa's extremely capable Rachmaninov G major and G sharp minor Preludes alongside the aged Horowitz's superior poetry, or mention the latter's superior character and contrast in Scriabin's Op 32 No 1 *Poème* and *Mosquito* Etude. And the aforementioned *Moonlight*? The famous *Adagio* flows simply, the finale is quick, clear and stingingly incisive but the *Allegretto*'s tapered dynamics are a tad mincing. In contrast to this concert's DVD release, the audio CD under review omits the applause.

Jed Distler

## Lars Vogt

**Beethoven** Piano Sonata No 32, Op 111 **Brahms** Intermezzo, Op 117 No 1 **Chopin** Nocturne No 20, Op posth **Janáček** In the Mists **Mozart** Piano Concerto No 16, K451 **Schubert** Piano Sonata No 18, D894

**Lars Vogt** pf <sup>3</sup>**Verbier Festival Chamber Orchestra** / **Gábor Takács-Nagy**

Video directors **Pierre-Martin Juban**, <sup>3</sup>**Anaïs Spiro**  
Idéale Audience International ©  307 9818  
(75' • NTSC • 16:9 • PCM stereo • O)

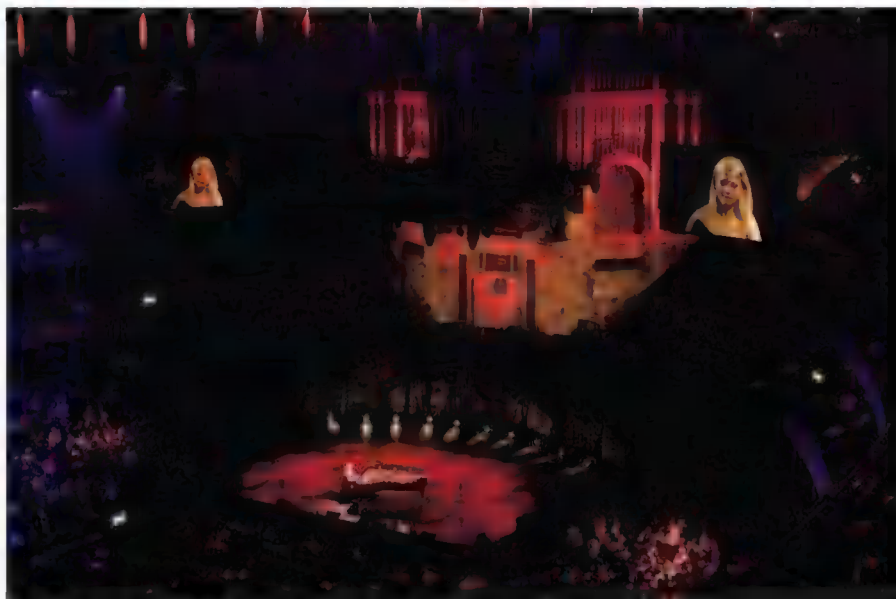
Recorded live at the Verbier Festival, July 16 & <sup>3</sup>19, 2011



### Accompanied and alone, Vogt at the Verbier Festival

There are few more agreeable venues in which to hear world-class performances than Verbier – if the music doesn't grab you, the scenery will – but from this film, apart from the opening generic shots of the spectacular surroundings, Lars Vogt could be playing in your local village hall. Director Pierre-Martin Juban's workmanlike *souvenir d'occasion* might just as well be an audio CD for all the visual interest it offers. However, the sound recording is superb and Vogt, to his credit, is at the other end of the scale from Lang Lang when it comes to bodily movement and facial expressions.

Throughout this demanding programme Vogt plays with a wonderfully quiet hand, drawing the most lovely tone from the Steinway (Verbier ships in its best instruments for the Festival). It seems to be fashionable these days to open a recital with *An Overgrown Path* or *In the Mists* but it isn't so fashionable to



Valentina Lisitsa and her piano on stage at the Royal Albert Hall, London

omit the first movement repeat of Schubert's G major Sonata (shades of Wilhelm Kempff's classic 1965 account). The work unfolds in an almost improvisatory reverie and I would buy the DVD just for Vogt's handling of the last movement (particularly the passage round the 44'30" mark). A sturdy rather than exceptional Op 111 follows.

Filming of the concerto begins not with the artists making their way onstage but with the conductor's up-beat. How good to hear one of the least-played of Mozart's miraculous cycle and to have it delivered by Vogt with understated, stylish conviction. The genial Gábor Takács-Nagy leads his young players with obvious affection. **Jeremy Nicholas**

## 'Stephen Hough's French Album'

**Alkan** La chanson de la folle au bord de la mer, Op 31 No 8 **JS Bach/Cortot/Hough** Toccata and Fugue, BWV565 **JS Bach/Cortot** Keyboard Concerto No 5, BWV1056 – Arioso **Chabrier** Mélancolie **Chaminade** Automne, Op 35 No 2 **Debussy** Clair de lune **Delibes/Hough** Pizzicati **Fauré** Barcarolle No 5, Op 66. Impromptu No 5, Op 102. Improvisation, Op 84 No 5. Nocturne No 6, Op 63 **Liszt** Réminiscences de 'La Juive', S409a **Massenet/Hough** Crépuscule **Poulenc** Improvisation No 8. Mélancolie. Nocturne No 4, 'Bal fantôme' **Ravel** Alborada del gracioso

**Stephen Hough** pf

Hyperion © CDA67890 (79' • DDD)



### Main-course Poulenc and Fauré among 'French' treats

*Eh bien, voici un disque vraiment délicieux!* Stephen Hough describes this album as 'a sort of musical dessert trolley'. Come, come. Too modest. There may be generous helpings of

bonbons and soufflés but it all amounts to a substantial gourmet feast of masterly pianism. Just looking at the menu inspires an anticipatory smile, beginning mischievously with a meaty *bors d'oeuvre* of German music arranged by the great Franco-Swiss pianist Alfred Cortot. This dips in and out of the more familiar arrangements of BWV565 by Busoni and Grainger in the course of making a more persuasive pianistic transformation than either. Hough opts for Cortot's alternative final bars, ending on a refulgent D major chord. It was recorded in Minneapolis in 2009 and the remaining 16 items come from two sessions, a year apart, in the Wyastone concert hall, half of them from 2010 and played on a Yamaha, the others from 2011 on a Steinway. Only the keener ears will detect any tonal or acoustic discrepancies.

Central to the disc are the works by Fauré and Poulenc, heard to their best advantage when programmed in this way, hand-picked and set beside short works by Massenet and Chabrier. There are some great performances here. Hough can be too coolly objective at times but in this repertoire, perhaps paradoxically, the expressive simplicity of his playing can make your eyes burn. In *Clair de lune* and Chaminade's once ubiquitous *Automne*, now rarely heard, Hough conjures up a heart-catching melancholy that put me in mind of Cherkassy. I can't offer higher praise. If anyone wants to hear how to make a piano sing, they should listen to these and the Arioso from BWV1056 (another Bach-Cortot item). He ends with Liszt's jejune, ferociously difficult Fantasy on themes from *La Juive*, surely one of his most vainglorious effusions, incorporating a few subtle Houghian nips and tucks. Excellent booklet. Fine recording. *De plus, s'il vous plaît!* **Jeremy Nicholas**

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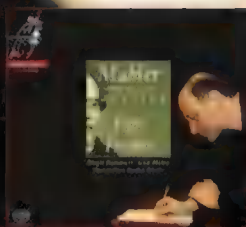
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## ORGAN VARIATIONS

We sent more than two dozen discs from a flurry of recent solo organ releases to **Marc Rochester** and asked him to pick his favourite four



The organ at the Stadtkirche, Durlach – originally by Stumm, rebuilt by the Swiss firm Goll in 1999

**H**ommage à André Marchal' is an intriguing compendium of recordings made between 1954 and 1975. The music ranges from Couperin and de Grigny to Augustin Barié and Jehan Alain, concluding with six of Marchal's own improvisations (including one on a theme of Dyson made at the inaugural recital of the Royal Festival Hall organ). These excellent digital transfers paint a picture of a consummate musician who approached everything with a wonderful feeling of ease and familiarity that made it all sound as natural as breathing. Even where more recent concepts of historical authenticity have rendered some aspects of his playing outdated and a growing obsession with accuracy exposes often very smudgy fingerwork (the Vierne *Impromptu* suffers badly), it all remains utterly convincing. Among the highlights are a crystal-clear and enticingly fluid account of the Bach *Sei gegrüßet* Partita (the only non-French music here) recorded in 1969 in Studio 104 of Radio-France, a captivating *Pièce* by Calvière recorded in Saint-Eustache in 1966 and a richly evocative account of Tournemire's *Office de l'Épiphanie* recorded in 1974 at Notre-Dame. I'd have liked a little more information about the organs themselves but a detailed chronology of Marchal's life and an intriguing note from

*'Marchal approached everything with a wonderful feeling of ease and familiarity that made it all sound as natural as breathing'*

François Sabatier pay generous homage to this major organ figure of the 20th century.

Bach with distinctly French accents appears in a fascinating collection of organ transcriptions played by **Martin Schmeding** on the majestic organ in Durlach, Germany. Alongside Widor (a highly romanticised take on the D minor Prelude from Book 1 of the '48', intriguingly subtitled *Miserere mei*) and Dupré (a scintillating virtuoso showpiece derived from the Sinfonia to Cantata No 29) are Bach transcriptions by Liszt, Schaab, Karg-Elert, Reger, Arno Landmann and Schmeding himself, as well as Bach's transcriptions of his own chorale setting *Wachet auf* and the Vivaldi D minor Concerto. The sound is little short of spectacular and the playing wonderfully effusive but most fascinating of all is to hear, side by side, so many radically different approaches to rewriting Bach, all of which make for hugely enjoyable listening.

Transcriptions – of Mozart's F minor Fantasia originally for musical clock, Elgar's *Imperial March*, Thalben-Ball's delightfully quirky recomposing of pieces

by Michael Festing and of *Finlandia* – sit happily alongside original pieces ranging from Wesley's Air and Gavotte to Mushel's Toccata, while innocuous miniatures – *A Song of Sunshine* by Hollins – rub shoulders with monumental mainstays – Reger's Introduction and Passacaglia – all intended to show the breadth and variety of the newly restored Harrison & Harrison of Bristol's most famous church in 'Redcliffe Restored'. Putting the instrument (and himself) through its paces in this eclectic programme is **Andrew Kirk**, who certainly doesn't want for courage or showmanship. The Mozart positively skips along, Guilmant's *March on a Theme of Handel* comes complete with marvellously melodramatic gestures and Cocker's *Tuba Tune* oozes pomposity. The recording is tremendously vivid and the only disappointment is Kirk's own booklet-notes, which are about as insightful and enticing as answers on a GCSE music paper.

At the other end of the booklet-note scale comes the substantial dissertation from Vincent E Rone of the University of California, who devotes seven packed pages to extolling the virtues of **Adam Brakel** and his programme of 'Romantic and Virtuoso' music on the mighty 109-rank, double four-manual consoled Austin organ of the Episcopal Church of Bethesda-by-the-Sea, Palm Beach, Florida. Like so many huge American organs, it sounds too big for the church, and the horribly damp acoustic – realistically captured here – does it no favours. But the big thing is the playing of Brakel who, if the photographs in the booklet are to be believed, models himself on that weirdest of all American organ phenomena, Cameron Carpenter. His playing lacks the sheer verve and spine-tingling brilliance of Carpenter but is profoundly rewarding in its mixture of excellent pacing, nicely nurtured musicianship and sheer virtuosity. **G**

## THE RECORDINGS



**'Hommage à André Marchal'**  
André Marchal  
Solstice (P) © SOCD281/2



**Bach Transcriptions**  
Martin Schmeding  
Ars Produktion (P) © 38 109



**'Redcliffe Restored'**  
Andrew Kirk  
Regent (P) REGCD385



**'Romantic and Virtuoso'**  
Adam Brakel  
Raven (P) OAR933

# Vocal



**David Patrick Stearns on the mezzo voice of violinist Virpi Räsänen:**

*'There's an extra something that's hard to put your finger on. Then you realise a violinist's sensibility is at work'* ► **REVIEW** **PAGE 105**



**David Vickers reviews new recordings of a pair of oratorios by Stradella:**

*'Two corrupt old perverts yearning for erotic satisfaction from the virtuous Susanna provide the finest performances'* ► **REVIEW** **PAGE 103**

## JS Bach

**Cantatas – No 35, 'Geist und Seele wird verwirret'; No 70, 'Vergnügte Ruh', beliebte Seelenlust'. Trio Sonata No 3, BWV527. Fantasia and Fugue, BWV542**  
**Le Banquet Céleste / Damien Guillon** *counterten* with **Maude Gratton** *org*  
Zig-Zag Territoires © ZZT305 (73' • DDD)



**Countertenor Guillon sings and directs the alto cantatas**

Leading countertenors of their generation have understandably felt compelled to record at least two of the four solo alto cantatas by Bach, especially those which best suit the respective voice-type. I first heard Damien Guillon on a recent recording of secular cantatas from Masaaki Suzuki and was struck by the unusual focus, lack of vanity and intensity of the sound.

Choosing *Vergnügte Ruh* shows off such qualities in abundance. Unlike the internalised poetics of Gérard Lesne (in his pomp) or Andreas Scholl's suavity across all registers, Guillon reveals a Deller-esque intimacy in his approach and production, one of bell-like purity, sailing at the top with enticing honey notes in the lower reaches.

The greatest challenge in BWV170 (composed as part of a mini-series in 1726 of works with obligato organ – where one imagines Bach was the keyboard soloist) comes in the treacherous 'Wie jammern', a true 'scena' of a kind where Bach returns to his forebears, eking out every rhetorical pip from a text. Where did such an unsettling aria come from? F sharp minor with no continuo line but empty unison strings, searing dissonance, disquieting chromatics and angular cries, all representing 'satanic scheming' and 'a thousand torments' as graphically and pitifully as Bach ever achieved.

Occasionally tempted to over-project and force his sound, Guillon is principally a sensitive chamber musician of a high order. He sits intelligently as *primus inter pares*, accepting that these unusually idiosyncratic organ parts represent more than mere accompaniment. The gritty portrayal of the sinner's visceral wish to have his life taken at the close of BWV170, in a sensational performance of the final aria, is one of several examples where Maude Gratton's fruity organ registrations add new dimensions –

all carried forwards in a hypnotic performance of the D minor Trio Sonata.

Gratton's concentrated and lucid playing, around the agreeably tanned strings and oboes of Le Banquet Céleste, determines the landscape for the fine Trinity cantata *Geist und Seele*. Guillon again delivers from within the solar plexus of the ensemble. Such an intimate and congenial approach affords this fine chamber cantata tactile immediacy and generosity of spirit. A most gratifying new view of these super-refined creations.

**Jonathan Freeman-Attwood**

## JS Bach

**'Secular Cantatas, Vol 2'**

**Cantatas – No 134a, 'Die Zeit, die Tag und Jahre macht'; No 208, 'Was mir behagt, ist nur die muntre Jagd' ('Hunt Cantata')<sup>b</sup>. Sinfonia, BWV1046a/1**

<sup>b</sup>**Sophie Junker, <sup>b</sup>Joanne Lunn** *sops* <sup>a</sup>**Damien Guillon** *counterten* <sup>ab</sup>**Makoto Sakurada** *ten* <sup>b</sup>**Roderick Williams** *bar* **Bach Collegium Japan / Masaaki Suzuki**  
BIS © BIS-SACD1971 (75' • DDD/DSD • T/t)



**Suzuki and his Japanese team move to the secular cantatas**

During the long and nearly completed journey recording all the sacred cantatas, Masaaki Suzuki has only once dipped into the secular oeuvre – memorably exploiting the outstanding talents of Carolyn Sampson in the virtuoso *O holder Tag*, BWV210 (8/06). The historical distinction between the lofty religious and ephemeral secular cantatas has thankfully now been banished by commentators, not least because the cross-fertilisation between the two is significant: Bach was forever drawing on commissioned 'occasional' works to satisfy liturgical demands in Leipzig from 1723.

Both these pieces date from early in Bach's career. The 'Hunt' Cantata was composed for the birthday celebrations of Duke Christian of Sachsen-Weissenfels in 1713 while Bach was in Weimar. He clearly valued it as a mythological panegyric allowing him (and his librettist, Salomo Franck) the chance to explore character in new ways. The bucolic context calls for colourful instrumentation, led by horns; Suzuki goes for some very 'gamey' playing

which the less accommodating might deem sharp.

This light and heady score is otherwise brilliantly caught, from the casting of the four characters to the exceptional continuo work, led by Suzuki himself. Makoto Sakurada (as Endymion) conveys the ensnaring potential of love with friendly caution, while Pan (the ever-communicative Roderick Williams) delivers the first feel-good excursion in celebrating our Prince as Pan of his country. Less satisfying is the show-stopper 'Sheep may safely graze', Joanne Lunn's usually meticulous control deserting her in unstable intonation.

The second work here, assembled like a jigsaw puzzle by matching extant text with known music from Cantata BWV134, dates from 1719, when Bach conceived this so-called *Serenata* in homage to his employer Prince Leopold of Cöthen. The composer draws on time-honoured if somewhat laboured allegorical characters, though for Bachians the chance to hear this wonderful music in new clothes will still enchant.

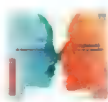
The high point is 'Es streiten', better known in its 1724 Easter context as 'Wir danken und preisen', where the easy dialogues between the focused Damien Guillon and the responsive if sometimes strained Sakurada articulate Suzuki's flair for gauging the celebratory spirit of Bach's secular work. Will we soon hear the remaining secular cantatas? **Jonathan Freeman-Attwood**

## Barber

**'An American Romantic'**

**Twelfth Night, Op 42 No 1. To be Sung on the Water, Op 42 No 2. The Virgin Martyrs, Op 8 No 1. Let down the bars, O death, Op 8 No 2. Reincarnations, Op 16. A Stopwatch and an Ordnance Map, Op 15. Sure on this shining night, Op 13 No 3. Agnus Dei, Op 11. The Lovers, Op 43 (arr R Kyr). Easter Chorale, Op 40 (arr R Kyr)**

**Conspirare; Company of Voices / Craig Hella Johnson** with **Faith DeBow** *pf* **Thomas Burritt** *timp*  
Harmonia Mundi © HMU80 7522  
(80' • DDD/DSD • T/t)



**Johnson unites two choirs for portrait of choral Barber**

This is very nearly the complete choral music



Conspirare and Company of Voices record choral works by Samuel Barber

of Barber, apart from extracts from his operas: with a generous duration of nearly 80 minutes there cannot have been room for *A nun takes the veil*. The vocal arrangement Barber made of his famous Adagio aside, his choral works are not well known.

These are exemplary performances and Johnson represents every nuance of Barber's expression markings. The Adagio – arranged as *Agnus Dei* – naturally steals the show and there is no temptation here, as in some recordings, to hurry those endlessly sustained vocal lines. *A Stopwatch and an Ordnance Map*, to a poem by Stephen Spender about a soldier's death in action, is set for male voices with timpani – a fascinating curiosity which comes off better than the choral version of the popular 'Sure on this shining night'.

But the major discovery is *The Lovers*, which Barber completed in 1971 to a commission from the Girard Bank of Philadelphia. They were a bit surprised when he chose the Chilean communist poet Pablo Neruda and even more so given the fairly explicit erotic texts. This story of a dying relationship seems to reflect Barber's separation from Menotti. This is the first recording of Robert Kyr's reduction of the full-orchestra score to a 15-piece chamber

orchestra, which is totally successful. Without the extravagant demand for a large orchestra, *The Lovers* might have been as frequently performed as *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*. Now it emerges as a kind of American *Winterreise*. Like the rest of the CD, the performance, with Conspirare and baritone David Farwig, is excellent. Barber's choral output now has the attention it deserves. **Peter Dickinson**

## Britten

Canticle I, 'My Beloved is Mine', Op 40. The Holy Sonnets of John Donne, Op 35. On This Island, Op 11. Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo, Op 22

James Gilchrist *ten* Anna Tilbrook *pf*  
Linn © CKD404 (62) • DDD/DSD • T/t



The Gilchrist-Tilbrook team in challenging Britten songs

Although *On This Island* started out as a work for soprano, it has increasingly been colonised by tenors (the work is for an unspecified voice). The cycle makes an interesting opening for James Gilchrist's recital, which focuses on Britten in the 1930s and '40s. The overriding impression is of a light tenor voice, a touch shallow in the middle to lower range and

uneven in quality. There is no attempt to match the dormant power that Pears, on a BBC Legends disc, brings to the longest song, 'Nocturne'. Instead, Gilchrist, well matched by Anna Tilbrook's clean-cut playing, offers gentle sensitivity and words that are crystal clear – the same features that bring the disc to a satisfying conclusion with the First Canticle.

In between come Britten's two most challenging song-cycles for tenor and piano. Few attack *The Holy Sonnets of John Donne* with the headlong force that Pears and Britten do, and Gilchrist uses his relaxed speeds to explore the poetry more intimately; also possibly because his voice takes on a hard-pressed vibrato when pushed. The *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo* are similar: so long as the music is lyrical, Gilchrist's fluid, light style can be very engaging but in testing passages (the high point of the fourth sonnet, most of the last) there is no getting away from a voice under stress. Well recorded, with a duo that is perfectly matched, this recital has its virtues. Even so, my preference is for a singer with richer vocal resources: if not Pears, then Rolfe Johnson or Bostridge for beauty of sound, Langridge or Padmore for poetic insight.

**Richard Fairman**



Tenor Ed Lyon performs Handel's cantata Look down, harmonious saint with Ludus Baroque

## Britten

'Britten Rarities'

**Britten** The Birds<sup>a</sup>. A Boy was Born, Op 3<sup>a</sup>. Canticle II, 'Abraham and Isaac', Op 51<sup>b</sup>. A Charm of Lullabies, Op 41<sup>c</sup>. Friday Afternoons, Op 7 - selection<sup>a</sup>. A Midsummer Night's Dream - Bottom's Dream<sup>d</sup>. The Sword in the Stone<sup>e</sup>. Voices for Today, Op 75<sup>f</sup> Purcell Don Quixote - From rosy bowers<sup>g</sup>. Oedipus - Music for a While (arr Tippett)<sup>h</sup>

<sup>a</sup>John Hahessy alto <sup>b</sup>Norma Procter, <sup>c</sup>Pamela Bowden contrs <sup>d</sup>Peter Pears ten <sup>e</sup>Geraint Evans bar <sup>f</sup>Terence Hanbury White narr <sup>g</sup>Benjamin Britten, <sup>h</sup>Peter Gellhorn pf <sup>i</sup>Cambridge University Musical Society Chorus / Benjamin Britten; <sup>j</sup>Choir of King's College, Cambridge / David Willcocks; <sup>k</sup>Suisse Romande Orchestra / Bryan Balkwill; <sup>l</sup>orchestra / Walter Goehr  
Decca Eloquence 480 2296 (81' • ADD)  
Recorded 1952-66

## Britten

The Ballad of Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard<sup>a</sup>. Choral Dances from Gloriana<sup>a</sup>. Chorale (after an old French carol)<sup>a</sup>. Five Flower Songs, Op 47<sup>a</sup>. Hymn to the Virgin<sup>b</sup>. Missa brevis, Op 63<sup>c</sup>. O can ye sew cushions?<sup>a</sup>. Old Abram Brown<sup>a</sup>. Oliver Cromwell<sup>a</sup>. The Salley Gardens<sup>a</sup>. A Shepherd's Carol<sup>a</sup>. Two Two-Part Songs<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Elizabethan Singers / Louis Halsey with Wilfrid Parry pf <sup>b</sup>London Symphony Chorus / George Malcolm; <sup>c</sup>Westminster Cathedral Choir / George Malcolm org  
Decca Eloquence 480 2336 (71' • ADD)  
Recorded 1960-64



Vintage Britten recordings including valuable first appearances on CD

The Decca Eloquence label has become a wonderful source of welcome rarities, thanks to the initiative and deep knowledge of the manager in Sydney, Cyrus Meher-Homji. These two discs of Britten rarities are additionally remarkable in bringing together recordings which, with only one or two exceptions, have never appeared on CD before.

On the first disc, *Voices for Today* was an occasional piece that Britten wrote for the 20th anniversary in 1965 of the founding of the United Nations. With a massive choir, here made up of the chorus of the Cambridge University Musical Society under Britten and the Choir of King's College, Cambridge, under David Willcocks, it sets a sequence of poems including one of Virgil's *Eclogues* in consistently revealing choral writing.

The other major item is the second of Britten's Canticles, *Abraham and Isaac*, covering the threat of Abraham to kill his son on God's orders. It was originally designed for Kathleen Ferrier to take the part of Isaac but, following Ferrier's death, Norma Procter stepped in, most ably scaling her voice down alongside Peter Pears as Abraham. This recording was sidelined and not released for 40-odd years. Meanwhile, for his definitive recording, Britten chose his favourite boy treble of the time, John Hahessy, to sing Isaac. Here, as in that definitive version, the voice of God is eerily conveyed by the two voices in unison.

The *Friday Afternoons* songs are from a collection Britten wrote for the school of which his brother was headmaster, writing simply for boys to sing them. Here John Hahessy is again the soloist, joined in 'Cuckoo' by Michael Berkeley, latterly a composer and broadcaster. Another early work is the setting of *The Birds*

by Hilaire Belloc, taken from a collection, *Tom Tiddler's Ground*, compiled by Walter de la Mare. *A Charm of Lullabies* was dedicated to the soprano Nancy Evans, who shared the title-role of Lucretia with Kathleen Ferrier and who, with her husband Eric Crozier, had been extremely helpful to Britten. Here the set is freshly sung by Pamela Bowden accompanied by Peter Gellhorn.

*The Sword in the Stone* is an oddity, with Britten's lightly scored music accompanying a narration about King Arthur as a boy (nicknamed Wart) pulling Excalibur from the stone with the help of Merlin. Sadly, here the music is very faint against the resonant narration of Terence Hanbury White. 'Bottom's Dream', sung here by Geraint Evans, is taken from the opera *A Midsummer Night's Dream* - a one-off when the role was taken in Britten's complete recording of the opera by Owen Brannigan, a favourite singer with him.

On the second disc the long-buried gem is the boy trebles of Westminster Cathedral singing the *Missa brevis* Britten had specially written for them and their inspired choirmaster, George Malcolm, here recorded live in a fizzing performance, originally issued on a 45rpm disc. *The Hymn to the Virgin* also has George Malcolm conducting, this time with the London Symphony Chorus. Otherwise all the remaining items, including the Choral Dances from *Gloriana*, for many years the only item recorded from that unjustly neglected Coronation opera, come from a disc recorded for Argo by the Elizabethan Singers under their founder, Louis Halsey. Immaculate performances, beautifully recorded.

Edward Greenfield

## Handel

Ode for St Cecilia's Day, HWV76. Look down, harmonious saint, HWV124. Concerto grosso, Op 6 No 7 HWV325

Mary Bevan sop Ed Lyon ten

Ludus Baroque / Richard Neville-Towle

Delphian DCD34110 (80' • DDD • T/t)



### More Handel from Ludus Baroque in Edinburgh

Handel set Dryden's sophisticated St Cecilia ode *Alexander's Feast* in 1736 and three years later he turned his attention to Dryden's earlier, shorter and more literal *A Song for St Cecilia's Day*. The reason for the composition was typically practical: he needed something to form a makeshift third part for his 1739 revival of *Alexander's Feast*, which was too short to fill an entire evening at the theatre (this is not explained in David Kimbell's otherwise illuminating booklet essay). On this occasion Handel's Dryden settings were performed alongside an unidentified concerto from his newly composed Op 6 collection; in this spirit,

Ludus Baroque follow the shorter ode with a neatly attractive performance of Op 6 No 7. As a bonus, Ed Lyon fervently sings the short St Cecilia cantata *Look down, harmonious saint* (composed in 1736 but never used).

The ode receives an orderly performance. I wish there were double the number of string-players: the sonority of only six violins is insufficiently grand for the overture's opening. Lyon does not achieve the ideally awestruck sense of timeless mystery and dramatic rhetoric in 'From harmony, heav'nly harmony this universal frame began', although I liked the relaxed shapeliness of the ensuing chorus. The cello obbligato in 'What passion cannot music raise and quell' is played poignantly by Chris Suckling (the interjecting violins and oboes seem ploddy); Mary Bevan gorgeously conveys the pious poetry of 'But oh! what art can teach' (organist Jan Waterfield's contributions contain a few surprising embellishments). The unaffected 19-strong choir outweighs the slimline orchestra at times. Trevor Pinnock and Robert King have more to say in illustration of Dryden's words and Handel's musical details but kudos to Delphian for the intelligent choice of cover art, reflecting Dryden's first stanza discussing the creation of the universe.

**David Vickers**

*Ode for St Cecilia's Day – selected comparisons:*

*English Concert, Pinnock (1/87) (ARCH) 474 549-2/ABL*

*King's Consort, King (A/04) (HYPER) CDA67463*

## Handel • Purcell

**Handel** *Silete venti*, HWV242. **Trio Sonata**, Op 5 No 4 HWV399 **Purcell** *King Arthur – Fairest Isle*; *Third Act Tune: Hornpipe*. *The Fairy Queen – I am come to lock all fast; If love's a sweet passion. The Indian Queen – Overture; Why should men quarrel? Timon of Athens – Curtain Tune. Oedipus – Music for a while. She loves and she confesses too*, Z413. *A New Ground*, Z339/3. *O! Fair Cedaria*, Z402. *Chacony*, Z730

**Miriam Allan** *sop* **Ironwood**

ABC Classics © ABC476 4997 (78' • DDD)



Aussie soprano showcased in Handel and Purcell selection

An odd programme – Purcell songs and Handel's radiant solo motet *Silete venti*, with items for the girls and boys in the band in between. Presumably it is designed as a showcase for soprano Miriam Allan, who reveals herself as what these days could almost be termed an 'old-fashioned' early music singer, which is to say bell-like in tone and fearless in the use of non-vibrato. I say 'fearless' because it runs the risk of sounding colourless and inflexible, a risk that Allan does not always overcome, most notably in a rather icy account of 'Fairest Isle'. Elsewhere, snatched phrase-endings, stiffly conceived embellishments and indistinct words (not helped by the recording)

give the impression of a Purcell singer wanting in either the sensual warmth of a Carolyn Sampson or the textural lucidity of an Emma Kirkby. Yet it does not have to be so: Allan is perfectly capable of nourishing the tone in places and her readings of the more theatrical 'She loves and she confesses too' and 'O! Fair Cedaria' are convincing and personable. *Silete venti* brings more expansiveness from her and she shows impressive agility in the passagework of 'Date certa' but in general she still needs to take greater interpretative command and find a more generous way of shaping phrases.

This is the first time I have heard *Silete venti* with single strings and, despite an improved balance over the Purcell, I am not sure that any gains in intimacy and transparency are outweighed by the loss in stateliness. Ironwood's fine performance of Purcell's *Chacony* is richly contoured, however, while the Handel trio sonata has weight enough to sound almost orchestral, thanks in part to an added viola line (which also allows the fun of an outrageous Purcellian cadence at the end). But it doesn't stop this disc from being only a partial success. **Lindsay Kemp**

## A Hopkins

'A Portrait'

**A Hopkins** *Back to Methuselah – Four Dances*<sup>a</sup>.

*A Humble Song to the Birds*<sup>b</sup>. *Johnny the Priest* (two excs)<sup>c</sup>. *Partita*<sup>d</sup>. *Pastiche Suite*<sup>a</sup>. *Piano Sonata No 2 – Rondo*<sup>e</sup>. *Piano Sonata No 3*<sup>f</sup>. *Suite*<sup>a</sup>. *Tango*<sup>f</sup>.

*Three French Folksongs*<sup>g</sup>. *Three Poems*<sup>h</sup>. *Three's Company – Trio*<sup>i</sup>. *Three Seductions*<sup>a</sup>. *Three Songs*<sup>g</sup>. *Viola Sonata*<sup>k</sup>. *Crosse Cantata*<sup>a</sup> **Dubery** *Evening*

in April<sup>a</sup> **D Ellis** *Head Music*<sup>a</sup> **Gilbert** *Above All That*<sup>g</sup> **D Matthews** *A Little Pastoral*<sup>a</sup> **Pekkonen** *Pieds en l'air*<sup>a</sup> **Phibbs** *Pierrot*<sup>g</sup> **A Plant** *On How to Sing*<sup>g</sup>

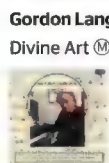
<sup>g</sup>**Lesley-Jane Rogers** *sop* <sup>b</sup>**James Gilchrist** *ten* <sup>c</sup>**Elizabeth Boyd**, <sup>c</sup>**Jeremy Brett**, <sup>c</sup>**Stephen Manton**,

<sup>c</sup>**Phillada Sewell**, <sup>c</sup>**Eric Shilling**, <sup>c</sup>**Stephanie Voss** *vocs* <sup>g</sup>**John Turner** *recs* <sup>d</sup>**Paul Barritt** *vn* <sup>k</sup>**Matthew Jones** *va*

<sup>g</sup>**Philip Fowke**, <sup>ek</sup>**Michael Hampton**, <sup>abg</sup>**Janet Simpson**

*pts* **Antony Hopkins** <sup>h</sup>*reader* <sup>pf</sup>*orchestra* / **Gordon Langford**

*Divine Art* ® ② DDA21217 (125' • DDD)



Career overview for musical 'odd-job man' Hopkins

In the 1940s and '50s Antony Hopkins was a familiar name as composer, conductor, broadcaster, author, lecturer, first-rate pianist – he called himself 'a musical odd-job man'. But he was much more than that for he did everything with distinction; and, although his muse was utterly English, his writing has almost a French piquancy. He was lightweight but never trivial and he could consistently charm the ear. So it is good to discover another mid-20th-century composer who wants to please the ordinary music lover and has rejected atonalism. The present

## IN THE STUDIO

An inside view of who's before the mics and what they're recording

### • Lortie and Dumay in France

Onyx microphones were hanging in the church of Saint-Denis-le-Ferment in central France this September to capture the violin of Augustin Dumay and the piano of Louis Lortie playing works by César Franck and Richard Strauss. On the tracklist is the Belgian's Violin Sonata and a transcription of the Bavarian's song *Morgen*. The disc will be released in February next year.



### • Gurney premiere

EM Records will continue its recorded exploration of rare English music with the taping of Ivor Gurney's E flat Sonata for Violin and Piano. Rupert Marshall-Luck takes the violin part and Matthew Rickard will be at the piano for the late-September sessions at Wyastone. The disc will be released in January.

### • The King's Consort return

The King's Consort are set to re-enter the catalogue with the world's first period-instrument recordings of Parry's *I was Glad* and *Jerusalem*, alongside other coronation music by Parry and his colleague Charles Villiers Stanford. The recordings, on TKC's new label Vivat, are conducted by the group's founder Robert King.

### • Beethoven in Taipei

Producer Phil Rowlands was in Taiwan in August recording Beethoven's Violin Concerto and Seventh Symphony with the Taipei Symphony Orchestra. He tweeted that the 'very worthwhile' performances were 'in the can' on August 30; *Gramophone* is currently ascertaining label and release-date details.

### • New Generation Mozart

Norwegian pianist and BBC New Generation Artist Christian Ihle Hadland has made his debut concerto recording, taping Mozart Piano Concertos Nos 21 and 22 with the Oslo Philharmonic this summer. The Simax disc is out in early 2013, coinciding with Hadland's UK tour with the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra.



The William Alwyn Festival (a project of The William Alwyn Foundation), returns for a second year after the initial success of last year's event. The main focus of the festival is devoted to celebrating the musical legacy of the British composer.

Alwyn spent the last 25 years of his life living in the village of Blythburgh, and so it is appropriate that a festival in his name is held in the Suffolk area.

There are many B&B's and hotels from which to choose. So, if you fancy escaping to an idyllic area for some excellent music making in high class performances this is the place to visit.

# The William Alwyn Festival 2012

Celebrating the musical legacy of  
**William Alwyn 1905-1985**

## THURSDAY 4th OCTOBER

St Peter's Church, Westleton

7.30pm Alwyn Talk 8pm Concert

**Peter Dickinson John Turner**  
**The Peasenhall & Minsmere Choir**  
**Christopher Bishop**

## FRIDAY 5th OCTOBER

Holy Trinity Church, Blythburgh 10.30am

**Cavaleri Quartet**

Aldeburgh Cinema 2.30pm  
**Film Screening**

St Peter and St Paul Parish Church, Aldeburgh 7.30pm

**James Bowman John Turner**  
**Andrew Plant Dorothy Linell**

## SATURDAY 6th OCTOBER

St Peter and St Paul Parish Church, Aldeburgh 2.30pm

**Ashley Wass**

Holy Trinity Church, Blythburgh 7.30pm

**Prometheus Orchestra**  
**Madéleine Mitchell Sarah-Jane Bradley**

## SUNDAY 7th OCTOBER

St Bartholomew's Church, Orford 4pm

**Prometheus Orchestra**  
**Sarah-Jane Bradley John Turner**

## Tickets from £7-£15

**Aldeburgh Music Box Office Tel 01728 687110**  
**Details from Andrew Knowles Tel 01480 456931**  
**apkmusicprom@ntlworld.com**  
**www.musicweb-international.com/alwyn**

anthology shows his range and his consistently seductive invention, with a consistent injection of often haunting lyricism. The opening Viola Sonata, with its fascinating 'Ground' and touching 'Epilogue', is a splendid work and his Partita for solo violin is all but worthy of Bach, with a splendid central fugato. He writes beautifully for the recorder – the Suite for descant recorder is both deeply expressive and chirpily infectious (and John Turner, with his elegant phrasing and beautiful timbre, matches every change of mood winningly). The Third Piano Sonata is another first-rate work, delectably diverse, the opening movement folksy, followed by a sombre *Largo* and a lovely *Tranquillo* with much uninhibited *gusto* in the finale. Hopkins also knows how to write appealingly for the soprano voice. The songs are all fresh and, again, often have a folk-like inspiration.

The second disc opens with an irresistibly catchy *Tango* and then, in the *Three Seductions*, becomes melancholy, a mood which returns in the Sarabande of the Four Dances from *Back to Methuselah*, in which he once more looks backwards in time to earlier musical styles, albeit enhanced with a modern overlay. The bonus tracks from the stage works are enjoyable but ungenerous. The eight 90th-birthday tributes from admiring contemporaries include David Matthews's winsome instrumental *A Little Pastoral*, and David Dubery's 'Evening in April' and Gordon Crosse's striking 'CantAHTa', both beautifully sung by Lesley-Jane Rogers. Joseph Phibbs's unpredictable 'Pierrot' is very much in the Hopkins vein, as is Elis Pehkonen's engaging *Pied en l'air*, the composer's own favourite. Altogether this is a delightfully entertaining anthology, vividly recorded, and can be especially recommended to those who, like me, had not previously discovered the composer's music. **Ivan March**

## Mouton

**Mouton** Missa *Dictes moy toutes voz pensées*. *Quis dabit oculis? Ave Maria...Benedicta tu. Salve nos, Domine. Ave Maria...Virgo serena. Nesciens mater. Compère* *Dictes moy toutes voz pensées*. **Tallis Scholars** / **Peter Phillips**  
Gimell Ⓢ CDGIM047 (68) • DDD



The Scholars shine a light on the man in Josquin's shadow

The more one hears Mouton's music, the stranger seems the oft-quoted description of him by a 16th-century theorist as the 'happy emulator' of Josquin. For a start, Mouton's wonderfully poised invention seems more expansive and discursive, even when writing in canon. Now that it seems that the two were far nearer in age than was once believed, the idea of an inspired follower is less credible. Surely the time has come for

Mouton to step out of his contemporary's shadow. That a second monographic disc should appear in as many months should help his cause no end.

The centrepiece here is the Mass *Dictes moy toutes vos pensées*, based on a song by Compère. Imposing and delicate by turns, some of its more truculent details (the reduced-voice *Agnus II* for three bass voices, for instance) may be a tribute to Compère's searching cast of mind. The top line is taken by an alto (Caroline Trevor) and a countertenor (Patrick Craig), a combination which, in terms of tone and balance, has served the Tallis Scholars admirably well recently. The motets reveal the composer's consummate versatility: the double-choir canon *Nesciens mater* has had many an outing but the canon in the short *Ave Maria...Benedicta tu* is in its own way just as impressive. In expressive terms, too, contrast the genial *Ave Maria...Virgo serena* with *Quis dabit oculis*, the lament for Mouton's royal patron, Anne of Brittany. Much as one might wish that the music were treated more dynamically at times, all this gives an admirably rounded view of Mouton.

But it's a shame that we only hear a single stanza of Compère's rondeau – which survives complete in several sources – so that the rondeau is shorn of the repeats that the form requires. Speaking of repeats, it's unfortunate, too, that the producers reuse the same take or takes for the second statement of the 'Hosanna' in the *Sanctus*. **Fabrice Fitch**

## Nicolai

**Liturgie No 1 - Kyrie; Gloria; Sanctus**. Herr, ich habe Lieb. Psalm 100, 'Jauchzet dem Herrn, alle Welt'. Psalm 31, 'Herr, auf dich traue ich'. Psalm 84, 'Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen'. Psalm 97, 'Der Herr ist König'. Psalm 54. Offertorium in Assumptione Beatae Mariae Virginis  
**Stuttgart Chamber Choir / Frieder Bernius**  
Carus Ⓢ CARUS83 299 (51) • DDD



Stuttgart Chamber Choir reveal a very 'Italian' German Otto Nicolai (1810-49), a contemporary of Mendelssohn, is renowned for composing a delightful opera, *Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor*, and for co-founding the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. He also unwittingly launched Verdi on his path to fame by refusing to set the libretto of *Nabucco*. But he was a church musician too, most of the pieces on this disc having been written for the choir of Berlin Cathedral.

There is an Italian cast to Nicolai's music, the result of his spending several years in Rome. The *buffo* duet for Falstaff and Ford in *The Merry Wives* sounds just like Donizetti in translation. Here, however, the transalpine influence is more sober. Psalm 54, composed

in 1834, includes neo-Palestrina counterpoint offset by a dance-like passage at 'Ecce enim Deus'. Frieder Bernius delivers a vigorous performance, with forceful repetitions at 'Quoniam ex omni tribulatione' that seize the attention.

The other pieces date from the last few years of Nicolai's short life. The musical content is, to be honest, not particularly distinctive, the most impressive feature being the sheer richness of the sound. The three short pieces from the Liturgie No 1 and the setting of Psalm 100 (the *Jubilate*) pit a quartet of soloists against a double four-part choir; the contrast in Psalms 31 and 84 is between eight soloists and eight-part choir, the antiphonal writing largely homophonic. The Stuttgart Chamber Choir sing with immaculate intonation and the recording is warm and clear. Anyone who responds to Mendelssohn's *a cappella* pieces will find much to enjoy. **Richard Lawrence**

## Richafort

'A Requiem for Josquin'

**Richafort Requiem Appenzeller Musae Jovis Gombert Musae Jovis Josquin Nymphes, nappés/ Circumdedeunt me. Faulte d'argent. Nymphes des bois/Requiem aeternam. Miserere mei, Deus Vinders O mors inevitabilis**  
**Cinquecento**  
Hyperion Ⓢ CDA67959 (70) • DDD • T/t)



Cinquecento explore Richafort and his mentor Josquin

It's hard to dispute the notion that Jean Richafort wrote his sumptuous Requiem as a memorial to Josquin, so shot through is it with references to the older master. The Huelgas Ensemble's recording of 2002 elicited a fairly typical reaction – admiration for the spellbinding beauty of their sound tempered by frustration at Van Nevel's tricks (doubling the cantus firmus lines at the octave). Cinquecento aren't given to such mischief and their sound has a magic of its own. The poise of the opening movement is sped up a notch in what follows, which carries both technical risks (Richafort's trademark bursts of semiquavers sometimes lack definition) and aesthetic ones: there is less a sense of monumentality here than in the Huelgas's reading, and (alone of all the movements) the Offertory is a little unfocused. All the same, this ought to win Cinquecento new supporters and not just among those who found those Van Nevel-isms maddening: the build-up from reduced to full scoring in the verse of the Gradual (the section beginning with the words 'Virga tua'), for example, is beautifully managed.

The disc opens with the two Josquin songs from which Richafort audibly quotes, and concludes with other laments on his passing. These are all very well done (barring a slight

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blip in the Appenzeller at the words 'ille occidit') but the recording's other focal point, Josquin's *Miserere*, is a bit of a curate's egg: the closing section is most impressive but, like other ensembles, the singers seem unsure what to make of the awkward, near-static ostinato verses of the beginning. But if my reaction seems more muted than for their past recordings, bear in mind that this is the first Cinquecento disc for which all of the music has been recorded before (often several times), so the reviewer is bound to listen differently. Listeners who have enjoyed their previous outings won't be disappointed. **Fabrice Fitch**

Richafort – selected comparison:

Huelgas Ens, *Van Nevel (10/02) (HARM) HMC90 1730*

## Stradella

Ester

**Silvia Piccollo, Elisa Franzetti** *sops* **Vicky Norrington**

*contr* **Riccardo Ritori, Matteo Armanio** *basses*

**Il Convento / Luca Franco Ferrari**

Brilliant © 94297 (68' • DDD)

## Stradella

La Susanna

**Gemma Bertagnolli, Isabel Álvarez** *sops* **Martín Oro**

*counterten* **Mirko Guadagnini** *ten* **Sergio Foresti** *bass*

**Harmonices Mundi / Claudio Astronio**

Brilliant © 94345 (90' • DDD)



Brilliant Classics offer oratorios by 'the finest Italian composer of his generation'. Musicologists concur with the judgement of late-17th-century writers and musicians: Alessandro Stradella (1639–82) was the finest Italian composer of his generation. Little is known about him beyond notorious scandals and his grisly death in Genoa at the hands of an unknown assassin; nobody has ever proved who ordered the hit but legends of a jealous patron of a pregnant actress are hard to shake off. One encounters nothing but reverence for the musical accomplishments of the pioneer of concerto grosso instrumentation, innovator of dramatic oratorio, prolific developer of the chamber cantata, etc, so the paltry discography of currently available recordings is perplexing.

One can imagine better documentation than Brilliant Classics accord to these two new Italian recordings of oratorios; neither booklet contains a libretto and I am fed up with labels telling me to find one somewhere at their website. *Ester* was written during Stradella's early career in Rome; only the vocal and basso continuo parts survive. Luca Franco Ferrari does not attempt to reconstruct the missing string ritornellos but fields an elaborate basso continuo group of viola da gamba, cello, violone, trombone, theorbo, guitar, harp, harpsichord and organ. The gutsy result is

more convoluted than is necessary or plausible and brief choruses are heavy-handed – one imagines Stradella designed them to be sung by only the soloists; the moralistic coda sung by 16 beefy voices sounds silly. Meritorious music includes the *stile antico* Hebrew chorus conveying lamentation of impending doom ('Armati sol d'oltraggio'), the bullying bass Aman's sarcastic instruction for the Hebrews to weep ('Piangete pur, piangete') and Esther's emotive petition to Assuero ('Supplicante, è prostrate'), but the performance is inadequate.

*La Susanna* was commissioned by Duke Francesco II d'Este and first performed in Modena's Oratorio di San Carlo Rotondo in Lent 1681. It has a superior libretto and a helpful surviving musical source that includes a sinfonia and numerous passages requiring three-part strings (played expertly by Harmonices Mundi); Claudio Astronio approaches continuo practice and instrumentation minimally and sensibly, and the choruses are sung rightly by the experienced soloists. Two corrupt old perverts yearning for erotic satisfaction from the virtuous Susanna provide the finest performances: Sergio Foresti suavely implores for relief from the pangs of desire ('Freddo gelo e fiamma interna') and Mirko Guadagnini complains that he is fettered in the chains of hopeless lust ('Ancor io d'Amor fui colto'). Gemma Bertagnolli seems to be experiencing vocal discomfort in Susanna's beguiling music as she bathes innocently while the sinister voyeurs loiter nearby; she is on better form in the prison scene 'Da chi spero aita, o Ciel!' – an exquisite lament over a ground bass enhanced by increasingly chromatic violins that reminds us that Purcell reputedly admired Stradella's music. Ensemble Aurora's more polished version deserves to be reissued (Glossa, 2004 – nla) but Astronio's capable performance will reward anyone interested in the development of Italian oratorio between Carissimi and Handel.

**David Vickers**

## Todd

The Lord is my shepherd. Stay with me, Lord.

The Call of Wisdom. Man Unkind. My Lord has

come. That we may love again. Vidi speciosam.

Among Angels. You have seen the house built.

I sing because...

**Tenebrae; English Chamber Orchestra / Nigel Short**

Signum © SIGCD298 (67' • DDD • T/I)



Diamond Jubilee guest star is given the Tenebrae treatment. Will Todd's moment in the glare of popular consciousness came in June when his anthem *The Call of Wisdom* was sung at the Queen's Diamond Jubilee service in London. Given here in a version for SATB and accompanied by a bland electronic organ rather than the



3 CD

For a long time, *La finta giardiniera* was one of the least-known of Mozart's early operas, perhaps because the original Munich version, sung in Italian, quickly disappeared from the repertoire until it was revived in German from 1779 onwards. A posthumous version from 1796 displays a skilful reorchestration, extremely 'symphonic' and typical of late Mozart – to such an extent that numerous specialists have thought that they detected the composer's own hand. It is this so-called 'Náměšť' version that is recorded here by René Jacobs, who sees in this amazingly lively opera 'a very ancient form of theatre, which blithely mingles farce with great passions (...) and elements typical of a 'modern' initiatory opera'.

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St Paul's Cathedral behemoth, it loses some of the original 'aaah' factor but, under the graceful direction of Nigel Short, the 22 mixed voices of *Tenebrae* imbue it with a warm, comfortable glow.

Words like 'exciting' and 'adventurous' do not readily associate themselves with any of the choral pieces on this disc but these uniformly excellent performances do not merely induce a deeply satisfying sense of well-being, they also occasionally send the hairs on the back of the neck rising. Nowhere does this happen more than in the atmospheric orchestral clusters which set the scene for 'Man Unkind', an extract from Todd's 1995 oratorio *St Cuthbert*, or the restrained power of *That we may love again*, superbly caught in Signum's richly atmospheric recording.

Without in any way diminishing the quality of the unaccompanied items – and the luminously dense harmonies of *Vidi speciosam* are quite inspired – what distinguishes the music on this disc is the ingenious interweaving of *Tenebrae* with the English Chamber Orchestra. Todd certainly knows what he is about: the three-part *Among Angels* achieves a delicious integration of harp and voices, while he creates a lovely feeling of timelessness as the sopranos float effortlessly around the rich string textures of *Stay with me, Lord*, at a whisker over seven and a half minutes the longest single track on this disc of miniature but perfectly formed musical marvels. **Marc Rochester**

## 'Conductus, Vol 1'

**Anonymous** Quo vadis, quo progredieris?. Genitus divinitus. Quod promisit ab eterno. Artium dignitas. Relegentur ab area. Qui servare puberem (four versions). Ut non ponam. Porta salutis. Ista dies celebrari. Stephani sollempnia. Beate virginis. Heu quo progreditur. Stella serena

**John Potter, Christopher O'Gorman,**

**Rogers Covey-Crump** *tenors*

Hyperion © CDA67949 (61' • DDD • T/T)



Three tenors for first disc in a survey of conductus music

Apart from various *Carmina Burana* selections over the years, there have been remarkably few recordings of the conductus repertory – those marvellous settings of mainly accentual Latin goliardic poetry from the years around 1200. Mark Everist, who directed the project here and wrote the booklet-notes, reckons that there are just over 800 such pieces; and this is the first of three CDs planned to give a good conspectus of the repertory.

Most of the music here is in just two voices. John Potter is one of the most experienced singers in the world for this kind of music and he is magically balanced by the glorious voice of the much younger Christopher O'Gorman. For the three-voice pieces the still impeccable

Rogers Covey-Crump joins them. So everything is immaculately clean: every passing dissonance is dead in place and nothing extrinsic is added to the music. It sounds lovely.

What is just slightly odd about these performances is that they seem not to make much distinction between songs in praise of the Virgin Mary, songs of political anger and songs about a whore. Also slightly odd, to my ears, is the use of regular metre for the melismatic sections of the music but free rhythm for the declamatory sections: only in two of the *Qui servare puberem* settings do we get a clear aural impression of the poetic metre, where contrasted line-lengths, occasional up-beat openings and carefully deployed paroxystone endings are the very lifeblood of the poetry. But these are seriously classy performances.

**David Fallows**

## 'Haec dies'

'Byrd and the Tudor Revival'

**Bax** Lord, thou hast told us **Britten** A Hymn to the Virgin **Byrd** Mass for Five Voices. Fantasia In C (arr JE Borland) **Finzi** Up to those bright and glad some hills **W Harris** Eternal Ruler **Holst** Man born to toil **Howells** Haec dies. Master Tallis's Testament **Pearsall** Tu es Petrus **Tallis** Funeral Music (arr M & G Shaw) **Vaughan Williams** Whitsunday Hymn **Whitlock** O living Bread, who once didst die **Choir of Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge / Geoffrey Webber** with **Annie Lydford, Nick Lee** *org* Delphian © DCD34104 (71' • DDD • T/T)



The Caius choir delve into music inspired by the Tudors

The title may be 'Haec dies: Byrd and the Tudor Revival': the *Haec dies* on this excellent disc is not by Byrd, however, but by Herbert Howells. Geoffrey Webber has had the inspired idea of presenting an anthology of anthems and hymns whose composers directly or indirectly took their cue from the interest in Tudor and early Stuart music that gained momentum from around 1900. The one exception is the 19th-century Robert Pearsall, composer of the evergreen arrangement of *In dulci jubilo*, whose *Tu es Petrus* is a contrafactum of his best-known madrigal, *Lay a garland*.

Byrd's Mass for Five Voices is present as a centrepiece but, expressive as the performance is, it is not in itself a reason for buying the disc. It is the juxtaposition of the familiar and the unfamiliar that makes it fascinating. Some composers quoted the music of their predecessors: *Eternal Ruler*, an excerpt from 'The Heavens declare the Glory of God', makes use of one of Gibbons's songs; *Finzi* quotes Byrd's *Attolite portas*; while *Funeral Music* is an arrangement for organ of the same tune by Tallis that Vaughan Williams used for his Fantasia. As for the purely original pieces, there are modal inflections everywhere:

nowhere more so than in Howells's jubilant anthem from 1918.

The mixed-voice Caius choir, recorded in the chapel of Worksope College, is quite admirable, as is the playing of the two organ scholars. All praise to Webber for planning, execution and a model booklet-note.

**Richard Lawrence**

## 'The Legacy of Mahler'

**Berg** Sehnsucht I. Er klagt, dass der Frühling so kurz blüht. Regen. Schliesse mir die Aufen beide (1907 and 1925 versions). Leukon. Schlafen, schlafen, Op 2 No 1 **Britten** A Charm of Lullabies **Mahler** Lieder und Gesänge - No 1, Frühlingsmorgen; No 2, Erinnerung; No 3, Hans und Grethe; No 4, Serenade aus Don Juan; No 5, Phantasie aus Don Juan; No 11, Ablösung im Sommer **Schoenberg** Brettli-Lieder - No 1, Galathea; No 3, Der genügsame Liebhaber; No 4, Einfältiges Lied **Shostakovich** Two Krylov Fables, Op 4

**Virpi Räsänen** *mez* **Marita Viltsalo** *pf*

Online © ODE1208-2 (53' • DDD • T/T)



A Mahler-inspired recital for the violinist-turned-mezzo

Much is made of Virpi Räsänen's dual career path. Though an accomplished violinist, she is now making her name as a mezzo-soprano – not unprecedented but indeed rare, and with obviously positive artistic side effects. With a Nordic timbre suggesting a genetic kinship with Karita Mattila, Räsänen's instrument is clear, clean and beautifully produced from a technical standpoint, with an extra something that's initially hard to put your finger on. Then, as the recital goes on, you realise a violinist's sensibility is at work and, with it, a lack of what many of her vocal counterparts seem to consider inevitable, such as pitch-obscuring vibrato at high volumes and a lack of fine details in any given vocal line. As much as her sound recalls Mattila, her vocal line is like Felicity Lott's.

The programme's theme, 'The Legacy of Mahler', is not pursued strictly. The Mahler selections are early works that other composers aren't likely to have known but were basic to Mahler's aesthetic and were refracted through works that have reached a bigger public. Early works by other major composers such as Schoenberg, Berg, Britten and Shostakovich also chart the early evolution of great artistic personalities.

It's a tough, ambitious recital whose unique collection of music allows Räsänen to duck comparisons of those who have come before her (such as Jessye Norman, whose superb Berg disc is on Sony). Though often not challenging in strictly vocal terms, these early works often lack expressive precision and thus require more interpretative speculation than usual. With her ability to pour on warmth and cool that any



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given phrase asks for, she charts a dramatic, extremely effective progression into darkness in Berg's 'Schlafen, schlafen'. One is particularly grateful for the clarity she brings when the Berg songs cross the divide between Mahlerian tonality to the weightlessness of atonality. There's never a sense of alternative aesthetic but just a mutation of what has come before.

Schoenberg is represented by selections from his *Brettli-Lieder*, whose levels of sardonic irony and satire aren't immediately apparent to modern interpreters and audiences. What are we to make of 'Der genügsame Liebhaber', whose protagonist ends up with his girlfriend's black cat on his bald head? Räisänen's considerable story-telling talents come into play in these selections, sometimes with broadly elongated phrases, a laugh here and there and a huge range of vocal colour. Musical continuity isn't always a priority if the story-telling demands word-highlighting tempo changes.

She hasn't the slightest problem creating multiple voices in Shostakovich's *Two Krylov Fables*, Op 4. 'The Ass and the Nightingale' has some of the best singing on the disc, partly because the Russian language brings out great warmth in her voice, partly because she knows how to natter like a native Russian. And though Räisänen doesn't sing English like a native in the covert complexities of Britten's *A Charm of Lullabies*, she feels the words intensely. Even so, a disc of early works is likely to have only limited appeal. Yet while 'The Legacy of Mahler' may not be a breakthrough in Räisänen's international presence, it's a highly impressive calling card. **David Patrick Stearns**

## 'Mezzo Moon'

**Brahms** *Nachtwandler*, Op 86 No 3. *Wiegenlied*, Op 49 No 4 **Mozart** *Abendempfindung*, K523 **Nielsen** *Strophic Songs*, Op 21 FS42 – Sænk kun dit

hoved, du blomst (Bow your head, O flower) **Reger** *Schlichte Weisen* – No 22, *Des Kindes Gebet* **Respighi** *Sei Liriche* – No 1, *Notte* **Schubert** *Litanei auf des Fest Allerseelen*, D343. *Nacht und Träume*, D827. *Schwanengesang*, D957 – No 4, *Ständchen*. *Wiegenlied*, D498 **Schumann** *Liederkreis*, Op 39 – No 5, *Mondnacht*. *Myrthen*, Op 25 – No 4, *Du bist wie eine Blume* **R Strauss** *Die Nacht*, Op 10 No 3. *Morgen*, Op 27 No 4 **Wagner** *Wesendonck-Lieder* – No 1, *Der Engel*; No 5 *Träume* **Weyse** *Natten er så stille* (The night is so calm) **Zemlinsky** *Vier Lieder* – *Süsse, süsse Sommernacht*  
**Pia Heise** *mez* **Roger Vignoles** *pf*  
Danacord © DACOCD720 (57' – DDD)



Vignoles accompanies Danish mezzo's debut recital disc

Pia Heise has an attractive voice and sings with appealing candour. Roger Vignoles is an attentive, vastly experienced accompanist. Yet it is hard to suppress the feeling that this debut recital is premature.

Judging from the scant information in the booklet – and I could find nothing online – the young Danish mezzo (though she tends to sound more like a soprano) is barely out of music college. If you heard her in, say, a student masterclass, you would acknowledge a singer of promise, especially in the two songs in her own language, Weyse's barcarole and Nielsen's floral lullaby, with its typically flavoursome harmonies. In both she sings with a confidence and a mezzo glow in the tone that can seem inhibited in the familiar German songs.

Where artless innocence is called for – Brahms's 'Wiegenlied' – she is touching. But, to be Beckmesserish, her technique is not quite settled, her range of colour and dynamics limited and her German flawed, with slack

final consonants and some strange sounds on 'a' and 'ei' vowels.

As yet her characterisation is cautious, generalised, with no illumination of individual words and phrases. The three verses of Schubert's 'Litanei', for instance, all sound the same. I hear no foreboding and mystery in Strauss's 'Die Nacht', no rapt enchantment in 'Morgen'. Heise also does herself no favours with her chosen programme of nocturnes, litanies and lullabies. As one slow, dreamy number succeeds another, narcolepsy too easily beckons.

**Richard Wigmore**

## 'Music from the Eton Choirbook'

**Lambe** *Nesciens mater a 5* **William, Monk of Stratford** *Magnificat a 4* **Davy** *St Matthew Passion* [27:11-56] a 4 **Browne** *Stabat mater a 6* **Kellyk** *Magnificat a 5* **Wylkynson** *Jesum autem transiens/ Credo in unum Deum canon a 13* **Tonus Peregrinus / Antony Pitts**  
Naxos © 8 572840 (79' – DDD – T/T)



Tonus Peregrinus open the great early English sourcebook

It is great to have a new recording from the *Eton Choirbook*, that astonishing collection of English church music from the end of the 15th century, the soaring musical response to perpendicular architecture. It is also great to have a new recording to Richard Davy's Passion setting, which seems not to have been recorded since the LP era (this time starting about a quarter of the way through, where the music survives complete and needs no reconstruction). In particular it is good to have what may be the first recording of the *Magnificat* by Hugo Kellyk – about the only English composer of the time who simply cannot be documented at all but a man who composed two glorious pieces. And it is good that Antony Pitts has applied his composer's instinct and experience to the very tricky matter of editorial accidentals in this music, resulting in a far wider range of chromatic colour than even the boldest of available recordings (something that geeks will have a marvellous time discussing).

Tonus Peregrinus is an ensemble that has recorded music from all centuries, from the 11th to the 21st, with particularly famous recordings of Pärt and Antony Pitts himself. So listeners need not expect the crystalline textures of the specialist Tudor music groups in such music. The high-quality recording technique brings out quite a few different kinds of voice here, with different degrees of vibrato and different approaches to musical line; but, within those limitations, the CD is an undoubted success.

**David Fallows**



Singing from the same choirbook: Lisa Beckley and Kathryn Knight of Tonus Peregrinus

# Opera



## Mike Ashman on Janowski's live Berlin Lohengrin:

*'Janowski leads an exciting performance in his best style, wholly free of the Tristan-ising of Solti or Karajan'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 111**



## Richard Wigmore on Simone Kermes's castrato aria exploration:

*'Kermes is never dull. At her finest her energy, technical brilliance and imagination silence criticism'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 115**

## Berg



**Lulu** (three-act version, comp. Friedrich Cerha)

**Patricia Petibon** *sop* ..... **Lulu**  
**Michael Voelle** *bar* ..... **Dr Schön/Jack the Ripper**  
**Thomas Piffka** *ten* ..... **Alwa**  
**Tanja Ariane Baumgartner** *mez* ... **Countess Geschwitz**  
**Pavol Breslik** *ten* ..... **Painter/Negro**  
**Franz Grundheber** *bar* ..... **Schigolch**  
**Heinz Zednik** *ten* ..... **Prince/Manservant**  
**Andreas Conrad** *ten* ..... **Marquis**  
**Cora Burggraaf** *mez* .....  
..... **Wardrobe Mistress/High School Boy/Groom**  
**Thomas Johannes Mayer** *bar* ..... **Animal Tamer/Athlete**  
**Martin Tzonev** *bass* ..... **Theatre Manager/Banker**  
**Emilie Pictet** *sop* ..... **Girl**  
**Cornelia Wulkopf** *contr* ..... **Her Mother**  
**Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra** / **Marc Albrecht**

*Stage director* **Vera Nemirova**

*Video director* **Brian Large**

EuroArts © 2 DVD 207 2568; © Blu-ray 207 2564  
 (173' • NTSC • 16:9 • DTS 5.1 & PCM stereo • 2-6 • s)  
 Recorded live at the Haus für Mozart, Salzburg  
 Festival, 2010



## Patricia Petibon leads as Lulu at Salzburg Festival in 2010

These days it's not unknown for productions of Berg's *Lulu* to omit the first scene of Act 3, as finalised by Friedrich Cerha. This might well have been tightened up by the composer had he lived to complete the score himself. Yet Vera Nemirova's Salzburg Festival production not only retains the scene but gives it unusual exuberance by placing the singers within the audience rather than on the stage for a good part of it. (Unless my eyes deceive me, one of the audience members quite prominently on

view is the leading German composer Wolfgang Rihm.)

Act 3 is by some way the most effectively filmed and persuasively performed. In general the rather monolithic stage settings and normal stage lighting don't lend themselves especially well to film presentation and even as seasoned a director as Brian Large can't avoid some fairly ungainly close-ups, including several too many of Patricia Petibon's wildly staring eyes. Balancing the work's divergent tendencies towards low farce and high pathos is never easy – *Wozzeck* is a far more homogeneous conception – and the boldness shown in Act 3 scene 1 does rather point up the timidity elsewhere, especially in Act 1.

Musically there is plenty to admire: if the relatively low-key approach in the opera's



Piffka's Alwa to Petibon's Lulu in Vera Nemirova's 2010 Salzburg staging

first half is the deliberate policy of conductor Marc Albrecht, this certainly helps him to pile on the intensity in the later stages. Thomas Johannes Meyer and Pavol Breslik provide the most potent characterisations in Act 1, so it takes longer for the main trio – Patricia Petibon, Michael Volle and Thomas Piffka – to command the stage both dramatically and musically.

Ultimately, it is Volle as Dr Schön and Jack the Ripper who impresses most in comparison with his recorded predecessors in these roles. Petibon's background in early music may be thought to give her an unusual degree of vulnerability when tackling such a different vocal style; there is less of Kundry or Salome in the background here than with most other Lulus on disc. After a cautious start, her performance gains conviction as it proceeds, helped by effective interaction with Tanja Ariane Baumgartner's eloquently haggard Geschwitz. In the end, I was won over, though some sense of unevenness remains: this is one of those recordings that takes time to reach the dark, disturbed heart of Berg's most ambivalently poised and perturbing work.

Arnold Whittall

## Cavalli



### La Didone

Anna Bonitatibus *mez* ..... Didone  
 Krešimir Špicer *ten* ..... Enea  
 Xavier Sabata *counterten* ..... Iarba  
 Katherine Watson *sop* ..... Cassandra  
 Maria Stieffert *contr* ..... Ecuba  
 Tehila Nini Goldstein *mez* ..... Creusa/Giunone  
 Mariana Rewerski *mez* ..... Anna/Fortuna  
 Claire Debono *sop* ..... Venere/Iride  
 Terry Wey *counterten* ..... Ascanio/Amore  
 Victor Torres *bar* ..... Anchise  
 Valerio Contaldo *ten* ..... Corebo/Eolo  
 Mathias Vidal *ten* ..... Ilioneo/Mercurio  
 Joseph Cornwell *ten* ..... Acate/Sicheo  
 Francisco Javier Borda *bass* ..... Sinon Greco/Glove

Les Arts Florissants / William Christie

Stage director Clément Hervieu-Léger

Video director Olivier Simonnet

Opus Arte (P) DVD OA1080D; (P) Blu-ray OABD7106D

(176' • NTSC • 16:9 • DTS 5.1 & PCM stereo • O • s)

Recorded live at the Théâtre de Caen, October 2011



### Cavalli's Trojan tale under Christie in Caen

*La Didone* is the third of Cavalli's 27 surviving operas. It was premiered in 1641 at the Teatro San Cassiano, the first opera house to open in Venice and the first anywhere to admit the general public. The librettist was Busenello, with whom Cavalli had collaborated on his previous opera and who was to provide the libretto of *L'incoronazione di Poppea* for Monteverdi.

Most of the human characters will be familiar from *Les Troyens*, but the plot takes a surprising turn at the end: Dido, abandoned by Aeneas, falls into the arms of Iarbas, a neighbouring king whom she had earlier decisively rejected. Berlioz would not have approved.

The action moves from the death of Coroebus in Troy to the denouement in Carthage. On the way there are, as in *Poppea*, interventions by the gods and comic scenes for the mortals. The dramatic pacing is effective, helped by this variety, although the absence of a love duet for Dido and Aeneas is regrettable: urged on by Mercury, Aeneas prepares to depart with indecent haste.

This production makes a good case for what *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* calls 'a rather uneven work'. The sets are simple – a wall with an arch stands for Carthage, the gods are framed by scaffolding – and the costumes are plain dresses, tunics, trousers. With a small orchestra of solo strings, continuo and a couple of woodwind, the focus is very much on the declamatory skills of the singers. Anna Bonitatibus is outstanding, especially in her confrontation, impassioned but dignified, with Aeneas. Krešimir Špicer looks no more heroic than he did in *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* (Virgin Classics, 6/04) but he is touching in Aeneas's farewell aria. Back in Troy, Cassandra mourns Coroebus over a chromatic bass that descends, and descends further. Beautiful, and beautifully done by Katherine Watson. The doubling and trebling of parts may be found confusing; and, as in a recent CD recording (Dynamic, 5/11), the translation mistakes Calicut for Calcutta. Fine supporting cast, especially Maria Stieffert as Hecuba and Xavier Sabata as Iarbas; elegant, well-paced conducting from William Christie.

Richard Lawrence

## Falla



### La vida breve

Cristina Gallardo-Domàs *sop* ..... Salud  
 Sandra Ferrández *sop* ..... Carmela/Street Vendors I & II  
 Jorge de León *ten* ..... Paco  
 María Luisa Corbacho *mez* ..... Grandmother  
 Felipe Bou *bass* ..... Uncle Sarvaor  
 Isaac Galán *bar* ..... Manuel  
 Antonio Lozano *ten* ..... Voice in the Distance  
 Natalia Lunar *mez* ..... Street Vendor III  
 Esperanza Fernández *flamenco sgr*

Juan Carlos Gómez Oastor *flamenco gtr*

Chorus of the Generalitat Valenciana; Orchestra of the Comunitat Valenciana / Lorin Maazel

Stage director Giancarlo del Monaco

Video director Tiziano Mancini

C Major Entertainment (P) DVD 710708; (P) Blu-ray 710804

(81' • NTSC • 16:9 • DTS-HD MA 5.0, DTS 5.1 & PCM stereo • O • s)

Recorded live at the Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia, Valencia, April 17, 2010



### DVD debut for Falla's rarely performed opera

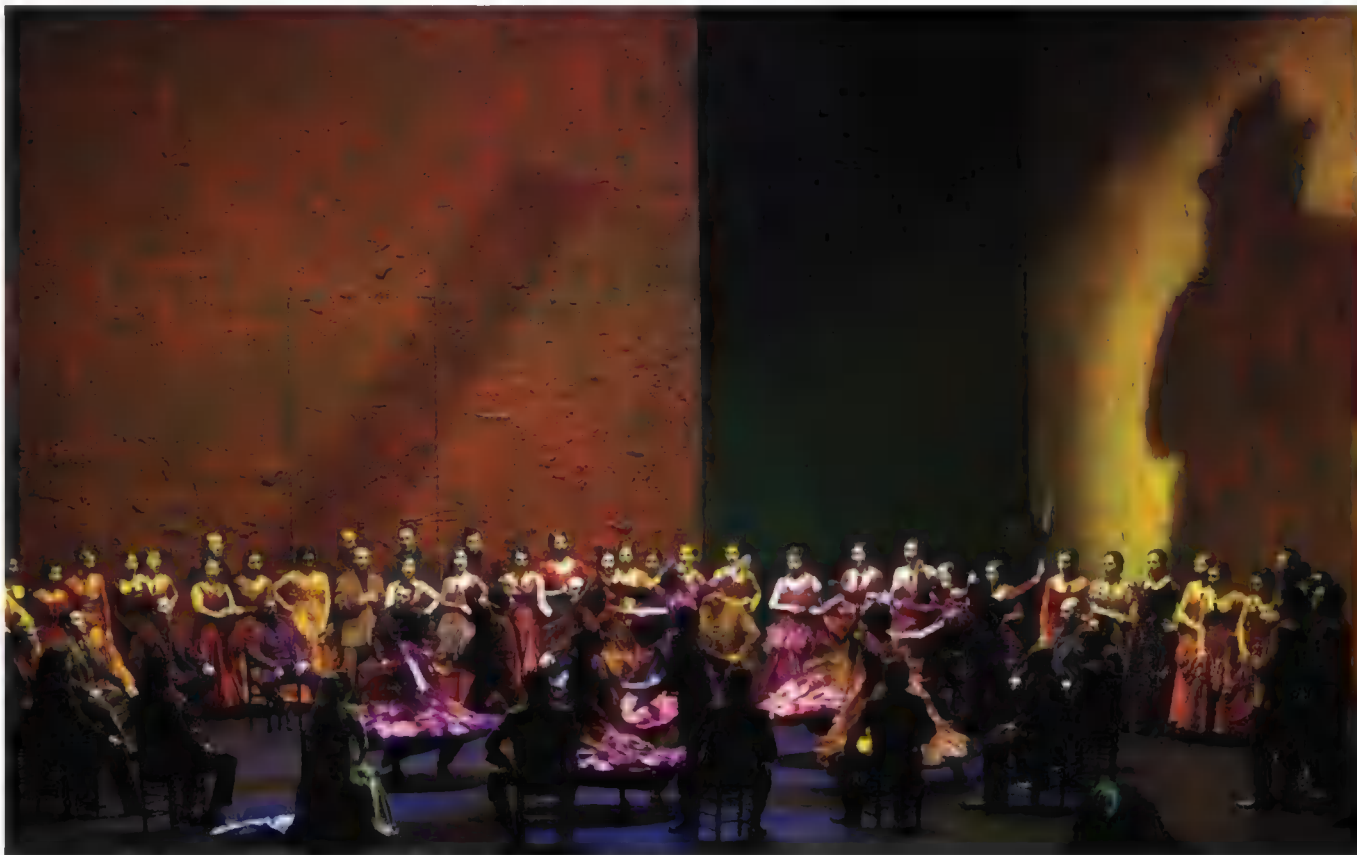
Expectations can't run too high in what appears to be the DVD debut of Manuel de Falla's infrequently performed opera *La vida breve*. Written in 1904, the two-act, 80-minute piece is what the conductor/composer Ernesto Halffter called the composer's 'Opus 1'. Thanks partly to later revisions, the opera shows what was to come from this great nationalist composer, though without the confidence, consistency and, most of all, pacing of later works such as *El Amor brujo*.

The non-dimensional plot is almost too simple to be viable. A beautiful gypsy girl, romanced and abandoned by a man above her in social station, disrupts his wedding by dropping dead from a broken heart. Victoria de los Angeles recorded it twice with Spanish collaborators and, for years, that seemed to be all that the world needed from *La vida breve*. Other recordings have arrived and orchestral excerpts are reasonably popular; but now this highly sympathetic video reveals the piece's strengths without trying to convince you that it's something more than it is.

The production consists mainly of a series of massive panels that contain the stage rather than portraying anything specific, although the red-and-black marble patterns reference the offstage chorus of foundry workers in this working-class milieu. Shadows suggest ceiling fans in a sultry Spanish climate. In grief from the first scene, the hapless Salud is shot looking quite dwarfed by the towering panels, which open from the rear to allow entrances of other characters, including the entire wedding party of her duplicitous lover, Paco. The style of movement often has a dream-like deliberation that justifies the opera's sometimes sluggish progression of events.

It's a compliment to say that a number of moments are hard to watch because the emotion is so undiluted, especially since we're aware from the first scene that the heroine is doomed. Cristina Gallardo-Domàs is the polar opposite of de los Angeles's emotional dignity: she literally clings to her faithless lover, Paco, from the waist down as he slowly withdraws backwards. Her theatrical savvy is such that she can sustain her emotional torment during long non-singing passages. Vocally, the role fits her like a glove; her pitch problems in heavier repertoire are nowhere to be heard here. Other voices are all excellent *verismo*-weight singers, though I miss the quirkier, ethnic-specific vocalism in the 1954 de los Angeles recording (available to download).

Specific directorial touches from Giancarlo del Monaco are well chosen and restrained. At one point, Salud's grandmother lights a candle and performs some sort of sympathetic magic.



Flamenco meets ballet in Giancarlo del Monaco's staging of Falla's *La vida breve*

The wedding singer, often sung by a baritone, is portrayed here by female flamenco singer Esperanza Fernández, costumed to resemble Gallardo-Domâs. A doppelgänger? An angel of death? Goyo Montero's choreography deftly melds traditional ballet and flamenco. Much as I'd love to report some minor miracle from the orchestral forces under Lorin Maazel, the conductor is attentive but brings nothing special to the score. **David Patrick Stearns**

## Rossini



### *La scala di seta*

**Daniele Zanfardino** *ten*..... **Dormont**  
**Olga Peretyatko** *sop*..... **Giulia**  
**Anna Malavasi** *mez*..... **Lucilla**  
**José Manuel Zapata** *ten*..... **Dorvil**  
**Carlo Lepore** *bass*..... **Blansac**  
**Paolo Bordogna** *bar*..... **Germano**  
**Bolzano and Trento Haydn Orchestra /**  
**Claudio Scimone**

Stage director **Damiano Michieletto**

Video director **Tiziano Mancini**

Opus Arte (P) OA1075D

(105' + 22' • NTSC • 16:9 • DTS 5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live at the Rossini Opera Festival, Pesaro, August 2009. Extra features: Cast Gallery and 'The Making of *La scala di seta*'



Rossini's early farce gets  
 a makeover in Pesaro

There is limited choice for *La scala di seta*, either on CD or DVD, so it is a shame that this live recording from the 2009 Rossini Opera Festival at Pesaro is not more lovable. Rossini was only 20 when he wrote his one-act *farsa comica* but the quick invention of the score already heralds the mature composer. The plot is a stock comedy in which a young woman is trying to avoid an arranged marriage, with the twist that she has already secretly married her loved one, who pays her nightly visits by climbing a silken ladder.

The Pesaro production updates this fairly predictable comedy-by-numbers to a very modern, chic apartment. The floor plan is reflected in a giant mirror at curtain-up and we watch stagehands wheeling in trolleys bearing sofas, beds, bathroom equipment and, finally, the singers themselves – a contrived if amusing touch. Unfortunately, the reflections in the mirror make the stage picture look confusingly cluttered on DVD and the director, Damiano Michieletto, encourages too much comic mugging from the character roles.

The most appealing member of the cast is Olga Peretyatko as young Giulia, who is exceptionally attractive – is that why the director has her changing in and out of her gym gear onstage? – and sings with a lyric sheen, until her soprano gets fluttery at the very top. José Manuel Zapata's tenor brings a Mediterranean warmth to the role of Dorvil,

though a tearing sound disfigures some of his top notes; and bass Carlo Lepore justifies the inclusion of an interpolated aria for Blansac, the unwanted suitor. Anna Malavasi makes a bright-voiced Lucilla but the overacting of Daniele Zanfardino, playing Dormont as a doddering old man, and Paolo Bordogna's Germano, here an immigrant servant from the Far East sporting a highly embarrassing wig, gets wearing very quickly. The authoritative presence of Claudio Scimone in the pit is a plus, ensuring a clean-cut Rossini style from the Orchestra Haydn di Bolzano e Trento. The only serious competition – a EuroArts DVD from Schwetzingen dating from 1990 – preserves a pretty, period production and singing of higher quality.

**Richard Fairman**

Selected comparison:

Gelmetti (EUR) 205 4978

## Verdi

### *Giovanna d'Arco*

**Nikolay Dorozhkin** *ten*..... **Carlo VII**  
**Anna Lichorowicz** *sop*..... **Giovanna**  
**Mariusz Godlewski** *bar*..... **Giacomo**  
**Łukasz Gaj** *ten*..... **Delil**  
**Marek Paśko** *bass*..... **Talbot**

**Chorus and Orchestra of Wrocław Opera /**

**Ewa Michnik**

Dux (P) (C) DUX0846/7 (104' • DDD)

Recorded live



### Early Verdi rarity live from Poland's Wrocław Opera

Verdi's *Giovanna d'Arco* should come with some sort of 'surgeon general's warning' before anyone hears a note. The real-life Joan of Arc was slow to be recognised as a saint and was still 75 years away from full canonisation when this operatisation of her story was premiered at La Scala in 1845.

That partly explains why this respectable early Verdi opera hasn't enjoyed a fraction of the mileage of *Ernani* (two operas before this). One is always ready to look past the operatic formulas that the composer was slowly casting off from one year to the next but his treatment of this now-sacred subject can seem particularly cavalier in light of Joan's post-canonisation iconography in films (Carl Theodor Dreyer), plays (GB Shaw) and oratorios (Arthur Honegger). Joan of Arc must have been more like a folk legend in Verdi's time, which freed the composer and librettist Temistocle Solera to have Joan and soon-to-be-King Charles struggle with romantic impulses. And Joan's death isn't anything like as non-negotiable as burning at the stake. She's wounded in battle and thus able to sing a long death-and-transfiguration scene. Along the way in this score, previous operas are recalled (the ensembles from *Ernani*) and future works are anticipated (the stormy night music in *Rigoletto*). Verdi was also striving for thematic integration in the score, though the themes may not be ones you much care about.

Compelling moments are numerous enough to warrant revivals of this opera, though it has an unusually high incidence (by early-Verdi standards) of hastily considered dramatic choices. That's a nice way of saying that whenever Verdi seems not to have known what to do, he wrote something attractive and lilting. Though Joan doesn't have a mad scene – her progression towards sainthood was far enough along to stave off that *bel canto* tradition – the fact that she hears voices inaudible to everyone else allows Verdi to touch that base. Given his taste for dark undercurrents, Verdi had Joan hearing demons as well, and in one scene characterises them as folksy voices tempting her into domestic obscurity. Less subtly, they battle for her soul against heavenly voices in some strong ensemble scenes. Act 3 begins arrestingly with stark battle drums; Joan, who is in chains at that point, sings a series of fractured, pungent yet lyrical vocal lines.

As is always the case with operas this uneven, the piece is unusually performance-sensitive – another reason why this live recording from the Wrocław Opera is the first *Giovanna d'Arco* in years. Among the existing ones, the 1972 Levine recording on EMI leaves little to be desired, with Montserrat Caballé in her prime

delivering the role's dramatic weight and having her coloratura technique released rather than challenged by more ornate moments. In the 1990 Warner video conducted by Riccardo Chailly with a cast led by Renato Bruson and Susan Dunn, stage director Werner Herzog has Joan picturesquely laid out in the final scene with a winding sheet that seems to fan out into eternity (stylised, but hardly offensive compared with the modern *Regietheater*).

Yet there's a place for this rough-and-ready newcomer from Poland. One could argue that this opera doesn't want to be fancified – particularly after hearing this earnest attempt to make the piece work on its own earthy terms. Conductor Ewa Michnik has a sure sense of pacing and goes some distance to create the right kind of dramatic inference in the score's less convincing moments. None of the voices are traditionally pretty but the conviction behind them is palpable. Not everybody will take to the occasionally wide vibrato in Anna Lichorowicz's voice but she lightens it beautifully for Joan's early, less worldly scenes and has no lack of dramatic punch later on. Tenor Nikolay Dorozhkin has a graininess that's not unattractive and seems a bit more real than the creamier Plácido Domingo on EMI. Mariusz Godlewski as Giacomo (Joan's father) easily survives comparisons with Chailly's Bruson. If there's one significant element missing, though, it's the kind of engineering transparency in the EMI recording that clearly reveals everything happening in the ensemble scenes in ways that this live recording (which is clear but dry and one-dimensional) rarely can.

#### David Patrick Stearns

*Selected comparisons:*

Levine (11/89<sup>8</sup>) (EMI) 088219-2

Chailly (3/92<sup>9</sup>) (WMI) 9031 71478-2

## Wagner

### Lohengrin

Klaus Florian Vogt *ten* ..... Lohengrin

Annette Dasch *sop* ..... Elsa

Susanne Resmark *mez* ..... Ortrud

Gerd Grochowski *bar* ..... Telramund

Günther Groissböck *bass* ..... King Henry

Markus Brück *bar* ..... Herald

Robert Franke, Holger Marks *tenors*

Sascha Gintenkamp, Thomas Pfützner *basses* .....

.....Four Noblemen of Brabant

Christine Bischoff, Isabelle Vosskübler *sops*

Judith Löser, Bettina Pleck *contrs* .....Four Pages

Berlin Radio Choir and Symphony Orchestra /

Marek Janowski

Pentatone ③ ④ PTC5186 403

(3h 20' • DDD/DSD • S/T/I)

Recorded live at the Philharmonie, Berlin,

November 12, 2011



Janowski's Lohengrin stars 'dream pair' Vogt and Dasch

After a bumpy, uneven ride through *Parsifal*, Marek Janowski's new live Wagner cycle continues somewhat more majestically with *Lohengrin*. I should warn straight away that his light-voiced lovers – already hailed by the German press as the 'Bayreuth dream pair' – may frustrate those used to, say, Jess Thomas and Elisabeth Grümmer (for Kempe, EMI), let alone Lauritz Melchior and Lotte Lehmann (Myto, from a 1935 Metropolitan Opera broadcast). Dasch, here denied the armour of that unique Bayreuth acoustic (see her, and Vogt, on the Opus Arte DVD of the 2011 Festival production), is the *ne plus ultra* in slim-sounding, girlish Elsas. But it sounds and works so beautifully, a complete contrast to Resmark's (very mezzo-ish) Ortrud, a perfect Weber-like foil to Lohengrin in their interrupted Act 3 love duet and – because she projects the text so well – moving and vulnerable in the confrontations with Ortrud or the loss of her husband. Vogt's voice is less compelling without the bonus of his visible stage presence but (in what is now his third recording of the role) his understanding of the part triumphs, there is much lovely quieter singing and he is able to bring special atmosphere to the Grail narration and the climactic negotiations (here heard complete) thereafter.

With Eberhard Friedrich getting a strong sound from his Berlin Radio Choir, doing justice to the intricate and radical writing of Wagner's most extensively choral opera, Janowski is able to lead an exciting performance in his best style. That is to say swift, of its (1840s) time – wholly free of the *Tristan*-ising of Solti (Decca, 10/87) or Karajan (EMI, 1/83<sup>9</sup>) – and with much care given to varying the balance and rhythm of the recitatives. Resmark is pushed at times by the tessitura (I feel an Alan Blyth-style lecture coming on about what are really soprano roles) but gives such a firecracker Ortrud that no one should care. If the other three male leads are less distinctive, they never fall short of a committed contribution to a performance that, in the Act 1 finale, the pacing of a complete Act 2 and the *crescendo* of Act 3, touches greatness.

There's a terrifyingly long list of worthwhile *Lohengrin* recordings, to which this newcomer is a serious competitor. Elsewhere, don't miss Kempe (EMI, 2/64<sup>9</sup>), Barenboim (Warner, 1/99) or Bodanzky (Myto) and try to hear Fritz Busch (anywhere), Klemperer (old Hungaroton), Kaufmann singing the Grail narration in Bayreuth (Decca, 9/10) or Christa Ludwig and Walter Berry in the Ortrud/Telramund duet in South America. Mike Ashman

## Wagner

### Siegfried

Lance Ryan *ten* ..... Siegfried

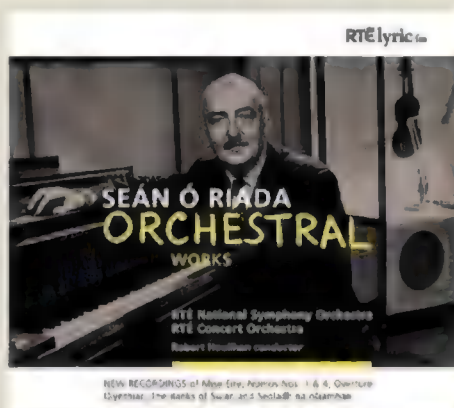
Susan Bullock *sop* ..... Brünnhilde

Terje Stensvold *bar* ..... Wotan

## ACCLAIMED RELEASES FROM IRELAND

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RTÉ lyric fm CD135

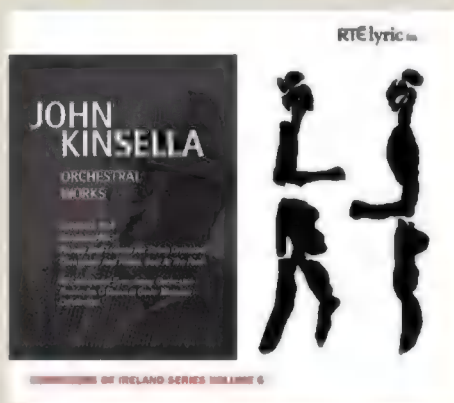


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Volume 6 of the Composers of Ireland series co-funded by RTÉ and the Arts Council of Ireland features a composer described by the BBC as "... the most significant Irish symphonist since Stanford."



'In front of a forest tavern', the first scene from Dresden's *Der Freischütz*

**Peter Marsh** *ten*..... **Mime**  
**Jochen Schmeckenbecher** *bar*..... **Alberich**  
**Meredith Arwady** *contr*..... **Erda**  
**Magnús Baldvinsson** *bass*..... **Fafner**  
**Kateryna Kasper** *sop*..... **Woodbird**  
**Frankfurt Opera and Museum Orchestra /**  
**Sebastian Weigle**

Oehms (M) ④ OC937 (3h 59' • DDD)

Recorded live, October 2011



### Oehms moves mics from Hamburg's *Ring* to Frankfurt's

Hot on the heels of its complete *Ring* cycle from Hamburg, Oehms Classics now offers the current Frankfurt staging. In *Siegfried* the title-role is sung by Lance Ryan, last encountered in the Valencia Fura dels Baus cycle (Unitel DVDs, 6/10). For that controversial production, Ryan was required 'to be the very acme of boorishness' and, as a result, I found his singing 'perhaps too unvariedly forceful'. It isn't possible to tell from the production photographs in the booklet whether 'boorishness' was also required in Frankfurt but unvaried forcefulness is still very much in evidence. Even in *Siegfried*'s more reflective moments there is little refinement or relaxation in Ryan's projection of Wagner's text and music. With his extraordinary reserves of stamina he is truly formidable in a broadly paced forging scene. But in Act 2 only the

short episode in which he muses about his mother has any degree of tenderness, and in much of Act 3 he comes across as disconcertingly blunt and matter-of-fact.

These limitations matter less than they might; Sebastian Weigle's sensitive grasp of the mammoth score's multivalent moods ensures that the performance retains a powerful grip on the listener and the vividly characterised orchestral playing is well recorded in a restricted but not excessively dry acoustic. In addition, the tirelessly heroic Ryan is well complemented by the other singers, perhaps most strikingly Jochen Schmeckenbecher, whose Alberich initially sounds more like the soulful Wolfram in *Tannhäuser* than one of Wagner's more malevolent villains. Schmeckenbecher proves far from lightweight in the role, however, and his vivid encounters with Wotan (Terje Stensvold) and Mime – the excellent Peter Marsh – show the Frankfurt ensemble working at its best.

Like Schmeckenbecher, Stensvold can also move towards understatement in places – a quality that, if required by the production, doesn't prevent him from creating an imposing impression in his role's more purple passages: for example, the exchanges with a notably vibrant Erda (Meredith Arwady). Vulnerability as well as exaltation are also well conveyed by Susan Bullock; the recording catches a certain shrillness in her higher-lying phrases but she

does much to ensure that the long final scene of Act 3, though quite expansively paced by Weigle, maintains the vice-like dramatic grip so characteristic of the whole. **Arnold Whittall**

## Weber

(H)

### Der Freischütz

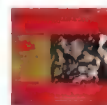
**Elfride Trötschel** *sop*..... **Agathe**  
**Bernd Aldenhoff** *ten*..... **Max**  
**Irma Beilke** *sop*..... **Aennchen**  
**Kurt Böhme** *bass*..... **Caspar**  
**Karl Paul** *bar*..... **Ottokar**  
**Hans Kramer** *bass*..... **Hermit**  
**Werner Faulhaber** *bass*..... **Cuno**  
**Hannes Haegle** *spkr*..... **Samiel**  
**Karl-Heinz Thomann** *ten*..... **Killian**  
**Edith Hellriegel, Helga Brose,**  
**Ursula Richter** *sops*..... **Bridesmaids**

**Chorus of the Dresden State Opera;**  
**Staatskapelle Dresden / Rudolf Kempe**

Profil (M) ③ PH10032 (157' • ADD)

Recorded at the Large hall of the Dresden Hygiene Museum, May 20-22, 1951

Bonus material: recording of radio interview with set designer Karl von Appen (in German); four arias from the 1944 Staatskapelle recording of *Der Freischütz* under Karl Elmendorff



### Freischütz's 1000th Dresden performance from 1951

Claims are made in this set's handsome booklet

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Lawrence Power *viola*

Britten *Sinfonia da Requiem*  
Walton *Viola Concerto*  
Prokofiev *Excerpts from War and Peace*

**Royal Festival Hall**

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Prokofiev *Symphony No.5 in B flat*

**Royal Festival Hall**

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Lawrence Power *viola*

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Britten *Lachrymae Op.48a arr. viola & strings*  
Shostakovich *Symphony No.7 in C (Leningrad)*

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**THE TIMES**



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for the importance of the 'pseudo-stereophony' recording system with which engineer/producer Gerhard Steinke (with no less a figure than Hermann Scherchen as artistic adviser) was experimenting in post-war Dresden. This 1951 *Freischütz* followed *Rusalka* and *Salome* in the line of Staatskapelle complete opera recordings, preserving the work of the cast and conductor of the opera's 1000th performance in Dresden and becoming the first-ever LP version of Weber's work.

The performance has class and interest but is no hi-fi wonder in embryo. The Wolf's Glen scene, an obvious target for the recording team because of the spatial and sound effects that Weber's score asks for, is actually rather dull. Neither the young Rudolf Kempe nor the producer rode a firm enough hand on Kurt Böhme's hammy and ponderous delivery of Caspar's melodrama and dialogue (for contrast, try his thrilling account under Erich Kleiber four years later in Cologne). Kempe and Steinke also seem in thrall to their unreliable bell chimes and echo effects, and the microphones in the temporary studio of Dresden's Hygiene Museum (*sic*) cannot cope with the orchestra's thunderous timpani or the added thunder machines.

Elsewhere Kempe, not so long out of playing the opera in the pit as principal oboist, predictably balances Weber's scoring to perfection – we are clearly in the 'right' sound world, after Mozart and Beethoven but before the over-Romantic, proto-Wagnerian weight of the 1944 excerpts under Elmendorff appended here. And his pacing, the Wolf's Glen apart, achieves an apt balance between 18th and 19th centuries, as in the scene with the Hermit's correction of Ottokar's sentence.

The three-day recording period produced uneven results from the cast. Aldenhoff is a wooden, overweight Max, applying by rote expression marks evidently dictated by the music staff. Böhme is a terrific Caspar as the Osmin-like pantomime villain of Act 1 but indulgent to a fault in the Wolf's Glen. The sadly short-lived Trötschel (heard, perhaps more appropriately, as Ännchen on the 1944 excerpts) is cute, girlish and sometimes a little off-pitch – but unreliable power supplies could play havoc with recording in those days, and she joins some of the horn work in suffering from that here. Beilke, Beecham's Papagena and First Boy on his pre-war Berlin *Zauberflöte*, is a distinctive Ännchen. The other men are fine but I still can't decide whether Karl Paul gives a brilliant, politically critical Brechtian reading of Ottokar's words or is just being microphone-shy.

I suspect that this set will interest mostly recording history and Kempe completists. For a 'historical' *Freischütz* – and, indeed, the most thrillingly colourful performance of the opera to have reached disc to date – rush to the Erich

Kleiber set (Documents). For a (naturally) better-recorded sequel, with spot-on dialogue production by Joachim Herz, look to the Carlos Kleiber (DG). **Mike Ashman**

*Selected comparisons:*

C Kleiber (11/73\*, 12/98) (DG) 457 736-2G0R2

E Kleiber (DOCU) 232915

## 'Amoretti'

**Gluck** *Iphigénie en Aulide* – Adieu. Orphée et Eurydice – Sourmis au silence. Il Parnaso confuso – Sacre plante. Telemaco, ossia L'isola di Circe – In mezzo a un mar crudele **Grétry** *La fausse magie* – Comme un éclair. Lucile – Au bien supreme. Silvain – Il va venir...Pardonne, o mon juge **Mozart** *Ascanio in Alba* – Infelici affetti miei. La finta semplice – **Amoretti**. Lucio Silla – Odo, o mi sembra udir...Fra i penser. Mitridate, re di Ponto – Lungi da te. Il sogno di Scipione – **Bianclegg**

**Christiane Karg** *sop* **Arcangelo / Jonathan Cohen**  
Berlin Classics © 0300389BC (73' • DDD)



## Baroque arias for Bavarian soprano's debut solo disc

Christiane Karg is a young soprano from Bavaria with an impressively varied list of opera performances behind her: *Poppea* for Glyndebourne Touring, *Norina* and *Musetta* in Berlin, *Anne Trulove* in Lille, *Zerlina* in Salzburg and *Zdenka* in Frankfurt where, this autumn, she is tackling *Mélisande*. For her second recital disc – after 'Verwandlung', a Lieder recital – she has devised a programme of mostly little-known arias from operas composed between 1765 (*Il Parnaso confuso* and *Telemaco*) and 1775 (*La fausse magie*). The title 'Amoretti' – 'Little Cupids' – comes from Rosina's first aria in Act 2 of *La finta semplice*.

Mozart accounts for five of the 12 numbers. The aria from *Ascanio in Alba* is preceded by a long accompanied recitative where the intensification of string tone at 0'57" is but one example of the sensitivity shown by Jonathan Cohen and Arcangelo. In 'Lungi da te' from *Mitridate*, Cohen is more leisurely than Christophe Rousset for Cecilia Bartoli on the complete recording (Decca, 5/99); a pity that the fine horn *obbligato* player isn't named. The sparks really fly in the excerpt from *Il sogno di Scipione*, a metaphor aria where Karg lets rip with some dazzling coloratura. 'Fra i penser' (*Lucio Silla*) isn't quite as successful and only a fragment of the preceding recitative is included.

The Gluck items are all done with style but it's the airs by Grétry that make the disc so desirable. Listen to the excerpt from *Silvain*, a complete scena only five minutes long, and you will be hooked. **Richard Lawrence**

## 'Dramma'

**Handel** *Rinaldo* – Lascia ch'io pianga **Hasse** *Artaserse* – Fra cento affanni e cento. *L'Olimpiade* – Consola in genitore **Leo** *Zenobia* in *Palmira* – Son

qual nave in ria procella **Majo** *Arianna* e *Teseo* – Per trionfar pugnando **Pergolesi** *Adriano* in *Siria* – Sul mio cor **Porpora** *L'Agrippina* – Tace l'augello. Germanico in *Germania* – Empi, se mai disciolgo; Se dopo ria procella. *Ifigenia* in *Aulide* – Le limpid'onde. *Mitridate* – Vedrà turbato il mare. *Polifemo* – Alto Giove

**Simone Kermes** *sop*

**La Magnifica Comunità / Isabella Longo**

Sony Classical © 88691 96395-2 (77' • DDD • T/t)



## Castrato arias excavated by Sony's star soprano Kermes

A flamboyant star in her native Germany, Simone Kermes is a dangerous, no-holds-barred singer. Like Cecilia Bartoli, whom she often resembles, she specialises in ferreting out unknown castrato arias. They don't come much more unknown than the disc's opening number, a swaggering, trumpet-festooned call to arms written for the great, if (to colleagues) insufferable Caffarelli by the Neapolitan Giuseppe de Majo. Kermes's voice is hardly conventionally beautiful. But here, and in a clutch of tempestuous arias by Porpora (Handel's rival in London in the mid-1730s), Leo and Pergolesi, she thrills with her fearless attack and coruscating coloratura. For vocal athleticism it would be hard to beat Porpora's frenetic 'Empi, se mal disciolgo', despatched by Kermes with her controlled recklessness, biting into the words and, typically, using her own embellishments in the *da capo* to heighten the expression of vengeful fury.

In reflective music Kermes is more controversial. Handel's 'Lascia ch'io pianga' – the sole familiar number here – is touching in its inwardness. Elsewhere, as in a rapt invocation to Jove from Porpora's *Polifemo*, she makes expressive use of *mesa di voce* – gradual swelling and ebbing on long-held notes – that in her booklet-note she rightly cites as indispensable to an 18th-century singer's armoury. But in her search for maximum intimacy she tends to overdo the cooing, slightly breathy tone, à la Bartoli: in a richly scored pastoral siciliano from Porpora's *Ifigenia in Aulide* and a gentle harpsichord-accompanied aria from Hasse's *L'Olimpiade*. In this mode her inadequate breath support can mean intermittent flatness. That said, Kermes is never dull. And at her finest – say, effortlessly negotiating vertiginous leaps while exuding mingled seductiveness and defiance in Pergolesi's 'Sul mio cor' – her energy, technical brilliance and imagination silence criticism. La Magnifica Comunità matches her in zest and colour. Voice and orchestra are well balanced. The notes by Kermes and Andreas Dommenz provide useful background, though, irritatingly, we get no dramatic context for any of the arias, several of them recorded for the first time.

**Richard Wigmore**

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Jerome Hiler Harmonia Mundi DVD 811063011090 £13.85
- DVD PERFORMANCE:**  
**BRUCKNER Symphony 3** Lucerne Festival Orchestra,  
Claudio Abbado Accentus Music DVD ACC20243 £14.50
- EARLY MUSIC:**  
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Michael Noone DG 10cds 4779747 £31.20
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**CHOPIN Etudes Opp. 10 & 25** Maurizio Pollini  
Testament SBT11473 £9.95
- INSTRUMENTAL:**  
**GROSVENOR, BENJAMIN Chopin, Liszt, Ravel**  
Decca D4783206 £7.50
- OPERA:**  
**BEETHOVEN Fidelio** Nina Stemme, Jonas Kaufmann,  
Lucerne Festival / Abbado Decca 2cds 4782551 £13.65
- ORCHESTRAL:**  
**MARTINU The 6 Symphonies** BBC SO, Jiri Belohlavek  
Onyx 3cds ONYX4061 £17.80
- RECITAL:**  
**ARIAS FOR GUADAGNI** Iestyn Davies, Arcangelo,  
Jonathan Cohen Hyperion CDA67924 £9.95
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GRAMOPHONE *Reissues*

## VOICES OF OPERA

EMI has plucked a plethora of operatic excerpts from its vaults and sorted them into two boxes, 'German' and 'Italian'. **Mike Ashman** samples both



Interesting choices: Astrid Varnay singing Elsa is picked by producer Tony Locantro

The names are all here. In this tranche of Italian opera they range from Enrico Caruso putting on the motley in Milan in November 1902 (what did pianist Salvatore Cottone think of it, and how much did he get paid?) to Natalie Dessay sleepwalking in Lyons in February 2007. In the German opera selection there's less of a time stretch but we still travel from Florence Austral sending Walter Widdop off to new Wagnerian deeds in London in October 1928 to Simon O'Neill returning Amfortas's spear in Wellington, New Zealand, in August 2009.

Significantly, these five-CD boxes are not highlights selections, bursting with 'greatest hits' recordings that can only be sampled in small bites. Compilation producer Tony Locantro has chosen instead to present an exceptionally wide range of EMI's artists in repertoire excerpts placed in musical order. The five excerpts from *Tannhäuser*, the four from *Rigoletto* and *Il trovatore* and the 10 from *The Ring* (et cetera) can – and indeed, should – be listened to at one go. They make musical sense in addition to representing a mini-conspectus of EMI's and each particular age's choice of who should sing what. There is also an awareness of what is currently available in the catalogues and a willingness not to

*'The German set's mini-Ring selection may be judged eccentric in terms of both shot and artist selection'*

duplicate – for example, Anna Moffo instead of Callas or Scotto in Violetta's 'Sempre libera' (one of three contributions from a singer still underrated on the European side of the Atlantic), or Astrid Varnay and Régine Crespin in Elsa's main arias instead of, say, Elisabeth Grümmer or Anna Tomowa-Sintow.

Locantro has evidently had fun selecting excerpts from individual operas. His *Otello* selection begins with the wonderful cheek of 'stealing' Decca's big star in the title-role, Mario del Monaco, from a little known 1951 Milan recording of 'Esultate' and follows up with an undoubted flashpoint from each of EMI's stereo sets of the opera. Cassio's dream and the vengeance duet from the 1968 Barbirolli recording reveal, rather fascinatingly, the difficulties both James McCracken and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau had keeping together with each other and with the maestro's generous tempi. 'Dio! mi potevi scagliar' is something of a *locus classicus* for Jon Vickers's emotional reading

of the title-role and for the eccentric, layered, almost rock'n'roll-style recording technique (and mixing) employed in Karajan recordings by Michel Glotz and Wolfgang Güllich. The 'Ave Maria' from the Zeffirelli film soundtrack – another recording that Carlos Kleiber didn't quite do – is simply a gorgeous piece of singing by Katia Ricciarelli, a name already insufficiently remembered.

Elsewhere the German set's mini-*Ring* selection may be judged eccentric in terms of both shot and artist selection. In a carefully coded booklet-note, writer Michael Tanner evidently thinks so – but EMI's choice unfailingly pulls out 'great' performances. *Das Rheingold*'s 'Abendlich strahlt' (with James Morris's Wotan) and *Götterdämmerung*'s 'Schläfst du, Hagen, mein Sohn?' (one of the few moments where the eccentric choice of Theo Adam as Alberich works) are two of the interesting scenes from the uneven Haitink Munich *Ring*. 'Der Männer Sippe' with Hildegard Behrens is dark, slow and beautifully conducted by Peter Schneider. And 'Winterstürme' to the fall of the curtain is the beating heart of the legendary 1935 Bruno Walter/Lauritz Melchior/Lotte Lehmann *Walküre* Act 1 – sounding here, it must be said, not so good as ever in its most recent transfer (Pristine currently have it better).

Some final words of praise for two sets that positively encourage interesting listening. There are some good 'historicals' on the Strauss disc – Maria Olszewska presenting the silver rose to Elisabeth Schumann in 1933, some of Welitsch's 1948 *Salome* finale and Margarete Teschemacher's 1938 Dresden *Daphne* with Böhm. The Italian set has some good Rossini from all ages, an interesting (and Lola-less) 1932 *Cavalleria rusticana* duet with Gigli (nearly a decade before his recording with the composer) and Dusolina Giannini, and *verismo* tracks from Miguel Fleta, Margherita Carosio, Maria Caniglia and Aureliano Pertile – again not your average highlights fodder. So, more please with the same criteria – French and Russian opera (definitely), English opera (maybe), operetta (certainly). **G**

## THE RECORDINGS



**'Voices of Italian Opera'**  
Various artists  
EMI © 440509-2



**'Voices of German Opera'**  
Various artists  
EMI © 440497-2

# Books



Colin Anderson reviews a study of Beethoven's chamber works:

*'A lifetime's experience and devotion inform Angus Watson's traversal of Beethoven's chamber music'*



Jed Distler reads an enterprising history of the piano and pianists:

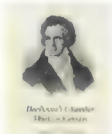
*'Stuart Isacoff's prose easily builds bridges and blurs boundaries between classical and jazz'*

## Beethoven's Chamber Music in context

By Angus Watson

Boydell & Brewer, PB, 318pp, £17.99

ISBN 978-1-84383-716-9



It's a pleasure to encounter this book – a survey of all of Beethoven's chamber music.

And all does mean all: a quick tot-up of the piano trios, string trios, string quartets, the sonatas for violin and those for cello, gives us, including the *Grosse Fuge*, 44 works. This study goes further still: here also is the music for wind, strings and piano (some of it without opus number), as well as appendices for other music, including variations, written for chamber forces. (The music for solo piano, being instrumental, is of course excluded.)

From the first of the piano trios to the last of the string quartets was for Beethoven a 35-year journey of remarkable and increasing ambition as well as visionary scope. David Cairns provides a concise foreword to this tome (now appearing in paperback following the two-year-old hardback) to whet the appetite for a menu of works for strings with and without piano that Angus Watson describes vividly and analyses perceptively. Watson is a professional violinist and a well-travelled pedagogue. He writes in such a way as to appeal to his colleagues, to amateur musicians and to music lovers, who may not be instrumental practitioners but who love to listen in a wholly engaged way and gain nourishment from doing so.

Watson's book can only aid the listening process, stimulating interest in a piece not known or inspiring a return to one that is familiar to check out the author's description of it. We begin in 1792: Beethoven has relocated from Bonn to Vienna and is biding his time before making an impact. He decides that his Op 1 should be a set of three piano trios. One of the great successes of Watson's book is the 'in context' tag. The author ensures that interesting background material is unveiled to help show the conditions

under which each chamber work was written (not least in relation to contemporary non-chamber music – the *Eroica* Symphony, *Fidelio* and the *Missa solemnis*, for example), why it was written and how each piece forms a part of Beethoven's ever-expanding genius for taking music forwards, both structurally and emotionally.

I recall the late Erich Leinsdorf saying in a televised interview that he could not conduct Beethoven's symphonies, concertos and choral works without knowing everything else that he had composed. Thus his knowledge of Beethoven's output was singular and direct; he could relate any particular symphony to the non-orchestral works that preceded and followed it, and could conduct the *Choral* Symphony aware of the profound and expansive string quartets still to come. Conversely, Angus Watson sets the chamber music within Beethoven's social life (and his relationships with his numerous patrons); he reports on the works' geneses and first performances, with details of the musicians who gave them; and studies how the pieces were received by their early audiences. Playing styles and notation are also considered. Copious music examples are included and anecdotes abound; Beethoven's viola-playing days are considered, as is his development as a pianist.

Watson argues that some of Beethoven's chamber works deserve further attention, not least the sole String Quintet, music whose neglect was thought 'shameful' by that great Beethovenian, Robert Simpson. One might also feel that certain of the earlier sonatas for piano and violin (he opts for the short form, 'violin sonata') need to be reassessed (except the so-called *Spring* and *Kreutzer* – but what an extraordinary work the latter is) and he considers the early Cello Sonatas (Op 5, really sonatas for piano and cello) as being of 'groundbreaking originality'. Makes you want to dig out a recording! I wouldn't, though, place the *Archduke* Trio above its two Op 70 predecessors – but I am willing to rethink.

A lifetime's experience and devotion inform Watson's traversal of this music and his vibrant descriptions of formally titled and essentially abstract pieces give them

a face that anyone new to or perplexed by Beethoven's creations might find helpful. Those with a more technical bent are well catered for; and all who are smitten by Beethoven's music are in for a treat.

Colin Anderson

## A Natural History of the Piano

By Stuart Isacoff

Souvenir Press, PB, 361pp, £20

ISBN 978-0-28564-112-9



Before delving at length into this fascinating, unevenly presented and richly informative book and

its enterprising, enthusiastic author, I must take issue with the title. How can a piano have a 'natural history'? Did the instrument evolve by natural selection? Did the fortepiano get wiped out like the dinosaurs? Besides, any narration of events or descriptions of concepts, no matter how accurately researched and judiciously presented, is inevitably structured, filtered and sorted according to an author's subjective editorial vision, as is the case here.

That said, Stuart Isacoff's retelling of piano history indeed embraces 'Mozart to Modern Jazz and Everything in Between', which will surprise no one familiar with the author's multifaceted background. Isacoff is not exactly a household word, yet many professional and amateur American pianists keep running up against his name. Budding students have played through his published piano arrangements and teaching pieces, famous classical virtuosos and jazz masters have been interviewed by him in print and on stage, while Isacoff's own jazz improvisations are often rooted in classical themes. For three decades Isacoff edited *Piano Today* (now a part of *Sheet Music Magazine*), a publication that showcased a wide stylistic range of music for all playing levels, masterclasses, interviews, feature articles and reviews. Likewise, Isacoff's prose easily builds bridges and blurs boundaries between classical and jazz, as



Hazel Scott: classified by Stuart Isacoff in *A Natural History of the Piano* as a 'Rhythmitizer'

he traces Oscar Peterson's scary pianistic command back to his studies with Paul de Marky (a pupil of a pupil of Liszt) or links the powerful, motoric pianism of middle-period Beethoven, early Jerry Lee Lewis and every-period Cecil Taylor in one fell swoop.

Readers familiar with *Piano Today* may sense a familiar ring to this book's whimsical, chatty, literary style, along with frequent narrative interjections in the form of long sidebars and extensive comments from talking heads. While its chapters more or less follow a chronological trajectory, the author frequently looks backwards or leaps forwards to reinforce his points. For example, a chapter on Mozart ('the first piano superstar') starts with Christian Zacharias on stage at New York's annual summer Mostly Mozart Festival, quickly cuts to several Alfred Brendel paragraphs on Mozart, then settles down to Wolfgang Amadeus premiering his D minor Concerto in a casino, before launching into a long sidebar discourse that picks up piano instrument history at the point where Isacoff left it hanging in a previous chapter.

However, the heart of the book is given over to Isacoff dividing musicians into four distinct, subjective categories: the Combustibles (the aforementioned Lewis,

Beethoven and Taylor, plus Stravinsky, Elliott Carter and Earl Hines), the Alchemists (Mussorgsky, Bill Evans, Ligeti and Cage), the Rhythmitizers (Art Tatum, Hazel Scott and most jazz pianists, Little Richard and most rock pianists) and the Melodists (anyone who focuses on tunes, be it Schubert writing sonatas, Chopin writing mazurkas or Liberace's Tchaikovsky First Concerto 'minus the boring parts'). The problem is that most of the pianists and composers duly categorised by Isacoff resist such facile pigeonholing. Yes, Beethoven combusted like mad in the *Hammerklavier* Sonata, yet the *Pathétique's* slow movement (among many) couldn't be more melodic if it tried. Everyone talks about Bill Evans's soft, gentle musings but what about the wild, aggressive playing he served up in his last years? Indeed, Isacoff himself condemns his very methodology, saying that 'any system of classification is certain to be artificial and in some ways indefensible'.

As the book progresses, Isacoff's narrative thread becomes increasingly performer-oriented and he becomes less interested in the piano's later history. For example, he presents vividly detailed accounts of the instrument's early evolution, as well as an amusing sidebar about early 'celebrity

endorsements' starring Beethoven playing one piano company against another as they competed for the master's seal of approval. At the same time, the author mentions Yamaha's recent acquisition of the Bösendorfer company without discussing the noticeable differences between brands. Given Isacoff's long-held interest in tunings, as borne out in his superb previous book *Temperament*, he understandably (and appropriately) devotes time to composer-pianists, such as Charlemagne Palestine, LaMonte Young and Michael Harrison, whose work incorporates alternative tunings, not to mention the extended techniques of John Cage and George Crumb. Yet why does Isacoff write at length about two popular composers for whom the piano was not a main focus: Astor Piazzolla and Leonard Bernstein? And the list of important contemporary music specialists proves far longer and more international in scope than Isacoff's supplementary paragraphs suggest.

Still and all, Isacoff's keen instinct for linking the past to the present and telling (or, in a few cases, retelling) a good story should inspire piano novices to investigate the world of what the author calls 'the most important instrument ever created'. **Jed Distler**

# REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of reissues and archive recordings

## Toscanini – a legacy without equal?

RCA's mammoth box-set of Toscanini's complete recordings is essential listening

At long last, with the 50th anniversary of his death recently passed (and woefully under-celebrated), **Arturo Toscanini** is back in the news. Christopher Dymont has been working on a book covering Toscanini's visits to the UK (and the recordings that resulted from them) and Harvey Sachs is preparing a new biography. 'The Complete RCA Collection' is the fruit for which Sachs, Dymont and (also relatively recently) Mortimer Frank serve as appetisers, an 84-disc collection plus documentary DVD and excellent booklet annotation that focuses, in roughly a foot's worth of shelf space and for the price of a family restaurant meal, one of the greatest recorded legacies of all time. Indeed, I cannot think of any other collection devoted to a single conductor that maintains such a high inspirational flight for such a long period of playing time.

By and large the set's contents replicate RCA's 'Arturo Toscanini Collection' of 1992, running in scope from the acoustic recordings with the La Scala Orchestra to the last released NBC recordings of 1954.

*'It would be impossible to better this handsomely produced and musically indispensable release'*

No added extras serve as dangling carrots, save for various BBC Symphony Orchestra recordings that were not previously issued on CD by RCA. Here the printed details of the BBC material need tweaking – Dymont will put you straight there – but the transfers are excellent.

Listening to Toscanini is like reading fiery aphorisms by Nietzsche or Emil Cioran in that his laser-like intensity charges everything programmed with extraordinary levels of energy, whether it be Beethoven's

Fifth (especially in 1939) or *The Skater's Waltz*. Although occasionally exhausting, the listening process is rarely less than riveting. The range of repertoire is wide, especially when you consider that the 'new' music of Toscanini's younger years (Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Debussy, Wagner, early Stravinsky and so on) is today's standard repertoire, while the manner of its interpretation combines warmly shaped singing lines with disciplined execution and dramatic inflections that can leap from *pianissimo* to *fortissimo* in a split second.

Toscanini's Beethoven (the whole symphony cycle is included) is as truthful as one could hope for, from the taut, post-Classical rigour of the Second to the *Eroica*'s emotional vicissitudes and, beyond the fiercely dancing Seventh (less aggressive with the 1930s New York Philharmonic than with the 1950s NBC Symphony), to the perennially adventurous *Choral*. The four Brahms symphonies undo years of interpretative mauling though here, as elsewhere, mention should be made of alternative transfers of the same material.

This current collection is based, where possible, on a series of post-1992 RCA releases called 'The Immortal' which, by and large, offers more warmth and presence than on the harder-edged 1992 transfers. One obvious case in point is Schumann's *Rhenish* Symphony, which sounds infinitely superior in the present context, while Verdi's *Falstaff* is also, sound-wise, better than one remembered. But if by chance you fancy trying just the (1950s) Brahms symphonies, then Pristine Audio's transfers are warmer still, with a more sonorous bass-line, especially in the First Symphony. The fact is that, whichever editions you choose, you'll soon adjust although 'The Complete RCA Collection'

is by far the neatest, most economical and, viewed overall, best-sounding option available. Operas such as *Otello* (especially), *La bohème*, *Fidelio*, *Un ballo in maschera*, *La traviata* and *Aida* burn themselves into your consciousness, even in cases where the singers wouldn't necessarily be your first choices, though scenes from *Die Walküre* and *Götterdämmerung* with Lauritz Melchior and Helen Traubel, with their lightning *crescendos* and broadly expressive *ritardandos*, come as close to the heroic ideal as it is possible to imagine.

Of course, making such lavish claims of excellence, even for the performances of lighter fare (which are just as remarkable), is in no way meant to minimise the achievements of other great conductors of the day, Wilhelm Furtwängler especially. But what I will say is that, given Furtwängler's essentially recreative style, it was inevitable that the more precision-conscious Toscanini would feel more at home in a studio environment, at least by the time recording conditions allowed him to achieve a real 'performance', although he too has a sizeable live legacy which includes a good deal of top-notch repertoire not included in the present collection. Still, that can be your next project. For starters, it would be impossible to better this handsomely produced and musically indispensable release. Years ago many of these recordings set standards, and they still do.

### THE RECORDINGS



'The Complete RCA Collection'  
**Arturo Toscanini**

RCA © (84 CDs + DVD) 88697 91631-2



**Brahms** Cpte Symphonies  
NBC SO / **Arturo Toscanini**

Pristine Audio © 2 PASC349

## Paray in Detroit

Every time I think of the conductor **Paul Paray** I recall a tale told to me by the ex-LPO clarinettist Basil Tchaikov about the Frenchman's London visits in the 1940s, when he refused to mount the rostrum until he was paid in full...and in cash! The LPO loved him (apparently, had Beecham not returned from America, they may well have offered him the top job) but our loss was Detroit's gain, and we're very fortunate that, thanks to Mercury's enterprise and superb engineering team, we can enjoy the fruits of Paray's considerable labours with the Detroit Symphony. Paray was very much of the Toscanini school, though in the case of the Franck Symphony, one of their earliest recordings, the difference between the conductors is quite marked, Toscanini giving the darker, more Wagnerian performance (just compare the opening pages under both conductors). I was interested to read Trevor Harvey's appreciative review as quoted by *Pristine* (from our June 1957 issue) which could just as well refer to Paray's stereo remake from November 1959, a recording that has since been reissued by Mercury itself (coupled with a fine Rachmaninov Second – nla). There's marginally more breadth in this 1953 version's outer movements and a little more pace in the *Allegretto*. The rest of the programme was also remade for stereo (and has been reissued, albeit on different CDs), which especially benefited Ibert's *Escapes* and the quieter moments of the *Rapsodie espagnole*, where on this recording the 'Feria' flies along at a terrific lick. Paray's greatest virtues were his vitality, his impeccable sense of rhythm, his ability to maximise on a composer's tone palette and his overall stylishness. This isn't the first *Pristine* Paray reissue – there's also some superb Wagner and Russian fare – and I sincerely hope it won't be the last.

### THE RECORDING



**Franck** Symphony, etc  
**Detroit SO / Paray**  
*Pristine Audio* © PASC346

## Mravinsky marvels

Some little while ago in this column I drew your attention to Brilliant Classics' 60-disc 'Tchaikovsky Edition' (3/12), commenting in particular on a number of historical highlights. **Yevgeny Mravinsky** was the featured 'historical' conductor, with performances of the Fifth Symphony (November 18, 1982), the 'Pas de deux' from *The Sleeping Beauty* (March 11, 1948), *Capriccio italien* (February 1, 1946), the



Arturo Toscanini: celebrated in a bountiful box-set from RCA

*Serenade for strings* (March 17, 1947), three movements from the *Nutcracker Suite* (March 11, 1948) and, most impressively, *Francesca da Rimini* from January 27, 1972 (which I have since been informed is also released on CD by Scribendum). Now Brilliant has taken the logical step of extracting this wonderful material as the basis of a three-disc Mravinsky set in its 'Russian Archives' series, though I do wish they would have taken the opportunity to bolster the *Sleeping Beauty* selections (there was more than enough room) with the numerous other excerpts that Mravinsky recorded at around the same time. The third disc consists of two movements from Maximilian Steinberg's *Till Eulenspiegel* ballet (October 25, 1946), Glinka's *Ruslan and Lyudmila Overture* (February 23, 1965), Rimsky-Korsakov's suite from *The Tale of the Invisible City of Kitezh* (April 4, 1949) and, most interestingly given his superlative way with this particular composer, Glazunov's Fourth Symphony (March 2, 1948). As with Paray and his Detroit orchestra (above), the further forwards in time you venture with Mravinsky in Leningrad, the better the playing becomes; and although the Glazunov Fourth enjoys the expected dynamism and svelte lines (though they're not exactly helped by Melodiya's 'mono-dynamic' sound), it would have been so much finer even five years later. But it's a compelling performance, as is the Fifth (once on Russian Disc) and, like the rest of the set, well worth owning.

### THE RECORDING



'Yevgeny Mravinsky Conducts  
Russian composers'  
*Brilliant* © ③ 9268

## Intimate Oistrakh

The appearance of Brilliant Classics' 'David Oistrakh Chamber Music Edition' had me hoping that at long last we might be granted easy access to the few precious recordings made by the Oistrakh String Quartet, Brilliant having already treated us to a fairly comprehensive edition featuring the Oistrakh Trio. But no, what we have here are – in the main – lustrous duo sonata performances (many of them taped live) with just two trios, Schumann's First and Hummel's Second. Those who fancy a generous sampling of Oistrakh in his prime will be riveted by, for example, Martinů's magnificent Third Sonata with Frieda Bauer and Bach's Solo Sonata in G minor. A fine trio of Beethoven sonatas with Richter, Goldenweiser and Bauer sound almost contemporaneous even though the Goldenweiser is from 1950 (No 4), while the other two (No 6 with Richter and the *Kreutzer* with Bauer) are said to date from 1967.

Two of the loveliest performances included, Schubert's C major Fantasy and Grieg's Second Sonata, are with Vladimir Yampolsky, who is also at the keyboard for a trio of shorter pieces, the first, Dvořák's 'Mazurek', announced from the stage, presumably by Oistrakh himself. The Tchaikovsky *Meditation* that ends that particular disc, a quite different interpretation to the one that Oistrakh taped for Melodiya (once out here on a Saga vinyl disc), is especially beautiful.

### THE RECORDING



'Chamber Music Edition'  
**Oistrakh**  
*Brilliant* © ⑩ 8402

# THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE TO...

## *The forgotten Romantic piano concertos of the 19th century*

Orchestral politics, rather than suspect merit, account for the disappearance from the concert platform (and recording studio) of many memorable piano concertos, says **Jeremy Nicholas**



Pride of place — seated at the keyboard among a galaxy of 19th-century musical stars — is here given to Anton Rubinstein, who included Tchaikovsky among his composition pupils

Of the myriad piano concertos composed in the 19th century, only a tiny number are ever heard in public. With weary predictability and few exceptions, the same works are played in the concert halls of the world year after year. Let me list them: Beethoven 1-5, Chopin 1 & 2, Liszt 1 & 2, Schumann, Grieg, Tchaikovsky 1, Brahms 1 & 2, Saint-Saëns 2 (sometimes) and, er, that's it. No one would deny that these works are masterpieces – or at least great examples of the concerto form – and fully worthy of their acclaim. They're the market leaders, if you will, the high-profile brand names,

the FTSE 100 of piano concertos – reliable audience-pullers that allow promoters to risk sticking a new orchestral commission and/or difficult contemporary work either side of the interval. Conductors are always more likely to opt for the adventurous or rarely performed orchestral work than the adventurous or rarely performed concerto. It's more rewarding for them to do this than prepare an unfamiliar concerto accompaniment to be sight-read by an orchestra on behalf of a soloist who will, ultimately, reap all the performance glory.

It is high time that concert promoters dipped their hands into the treasure chest of

Romantic concertos and followed the lead of independent labels such as Vox, Hyperion, Chandos, Dutton, Danacord and others. I read that young Benjamin Grosvenor is champing at the bit to record Moszkowski's splendid Piano Concerto. If Decca takes its courage in its hand I guarantee it will be a best-seller, that other pianists will want to take it up, and that the public will cry with one voice, 'Marvellous! Why haven't we heard this before?' With that in mind, here are my suggestions for those who want to dip their toes into the tuneful, expertly crafted, powerfully effective world of the neglected virtuoso Romantic piano concerto. **G**



### 4 Sgambati

Piano Concerto in G minor, Op 15  
Jorge Bolet *pf*  
Nürnberg Symphony Orchestra  
/ Ainslee Cox

Colosseum (M) ➔ COL9020.2

A late-19th-century piano concerto by an Italian is a rarity. Like his near-contemporary Giuseppe Martucci, Giovanni Sgambati (1841-1914) devoted himself to instrumental music rather than opera. The first movement is scored with a Brahmsian weight and sonority, and the work overall, with attractive themes and a bravura solo part, is more Germanic than Italian.



### 4 Litoff

Concerto symphonique No 4  
in D minor, Op 102  
Gerald Robbins *pf*  
Monte-Carlo Opera Orchestra /

Edouard Van Remoortel

Genesis (M) GCD101 (6/74)

Despite the title, this 1852 work by Henry Litoff (1818-91) is a piano concerto, notwithstanding the integration of the solo part into the musical argument and the symphonic proportions of the work. The famous *Scherzo* introduced the piccolo and triangle into a piano concerto for the first time. Mendelssohn and Liszt seem to have joined hands in this fun piece.



### 5 Stojowski

Piano Concerto No 1  
in F sharp minor, Op 3  
Jonathan Plowright *pf*  
BBC Scottish Symphony

Orchestra / Martyn Brabbins

Hyperion (C) CDA67314 (6/02)

One of the most vivid of all Romantic piano concertos – revived in Hyperion's ground-breaking series – Zygmunt Stojowski's (1870-1946) First Piano Concerto, composed in 1890, is stunningly well served by Plowright, Brabbins and the Scottish players. Gorgeous melodies, dramatic characterisation and a vibrant orchestral backdrop make it hard to resist.



### 5 Rubinstein

Piano Concerto No 4  
in D minor, Op 70  
Joseph Moog *pf*  
Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie

Rheinland-Pfalz / Nicholas Milton

Onyx (C) ONYX4089 (6/12)

He might have suffered from 'the fatal gift of fluency' but in this magnificent work, once an accepted part of the repertoire, Anton Rubinstein (1829-94) wrote with focus, economy and inspiration. The version we now know appeared in 1872 and, as one writer put it: 'It's one of the great "thriller" concertos of the 19th century...Would make a good substitute for the Grieg.'



### 5 Hummel

Piano Concerto  
in A minor, Op 85  
Stephen Hough *pf*  
English Chamber Orchestra /

Bryden Thomson

Chandos (C) CHAN8507 (4/87)

Hough's *Gramophone* Award-winning disc of the A minor Concerto (1821) by Hummel (1778-1837), coupled with the B minor Concerto, Op 89 (1819), is a prime example of how an artist with the right temperament, technique and imagination, aided by spot-on orchestral playing, can turn a very good work into a minor masterpiece.



### 5 MacDowell

Piano Concerto No 2  
in D minor, Op 23  
Van Cliburn *pf*  
Chicago Symphony Orchestra

/ Walter Hendl

RCA (S) 7 88697 742852 (8/61)

The first movement, alternating between Stygian gloom and heroic flourishes, is followed by a fleet-fingered *Scherzo* inspired by Ellen Terry's Beatrice in *Much Ado about Nothing*, which Edward MacDowell (1860-1908) had seen in London. The finale quotes the first movement and ends in a riotous D major. MacDowell was just 24 when he composed the piece.



### 5 Henselt

Piano Concerto  
in F minor, Op 16  
Marc-André Hamelin *pf*  
BBC Scottish Symphony

Orchestra / Martyn Brabbins

Hyperion (C) CDA66717 (8/94)

'Contains pianistic difficulties not readily apparent to the listener,' says one commentator in gleeful understatement. Premiered by Clara Schumann in 1844, this inventive and tuneful concerto by Adolf von Henselt (1814-89) was played by everyone from Gottschalk to Rachmaninov. When it fell out of fashion, pianists, it is said, breathed a universal sigh of relief.



### 3 Raff

Piano Concerto  
in C minor, Op 185  
Jean-François Antonioli *pf*  
Lausanne Chamber Orchestra /

Lawrence Foster

Claves (C) CD50-8806 (8/89)

If the success of a grand, Romantic piano concerto were to be judged on the strength of its melodic content, Joachim Raff's (1822-82) single essay must put it near the top. The chordal blocks in the first movement, anticipating Rachmaninov's Third, and the thematic combinations of its glittering cadenza add to the work's distinction. It dates from early 1873.



### 5 Scharwenka

Piano Concerto No 1  
in B flat minor, Op 32  
Earl Wild *pf*  
Boston Symphony Orchestra /

Erich Leinsdorf

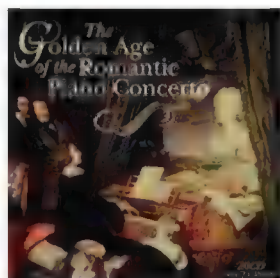
Ivory Classics (M) 2 77003 (A/07)

Completed in 1877, Xaver Scharwenka's (1850-1924) concerto has three strong movements with an *Adagio* included in the first (the young Mahler had this in his repertoire). Once immensely popular, it hadn't been played in the US since 1893 until Wild and Leinsdorf revived it 75 years later. Wild had studied the work in 1928 with Selmar Janson, a pupil of Scharwenka.

## 1 Moszkowski

Piano Concerto in E, Op 59

Michael Ponti *pf* Philharmonia Hungarica / Hans Richard Stracke Brilliant (C) (20) 9021



'No music of his will ever disturb or challenge the soul,' wrote JB Priestley about Moritz Moszkowski (1854-1925) before asking, 'but has he not given me delight, hours and hours of it?' This sunny, melodious, four-movement work of champagne brilliance was once immensely popular (especially in England, strangely) until the First World War. Moszkowski wrote it in 1898, dedicating it to his erstwhile pupil Josef Hofmann. No one has done more than Michael Ponti (now sadly incapacitated after a stroke) to revive the forgotten concerto masterpieces of the 19th century, and his first (rather than his second) recording of the Moszkowski is a classic of its kind.

Visit the Gramophone Player at [gramophone.co.uk](http://gramophone.co.uk) to sample an excerpt from Moszkowski's Piano Concerto played by Michael Ponti

## THE SPECIALIST

Share your top 19th-century Romantic piano concerto recordings on the forum at [gramophone.co.uk](http://gramophone.co.uk); suggest rarely performed concert overture recordings by Malcolm Arnold (right) et al, the subject of next month's specialist, David Threasher.



# THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

## *Loveliest of rhapsodies*

**George Butterworth's** orchestral rhapsody *A Shropshire Lad* ingeniously reflects Housman's pastoral world. **Jeremy Dibble** compares recordings of this haunting work

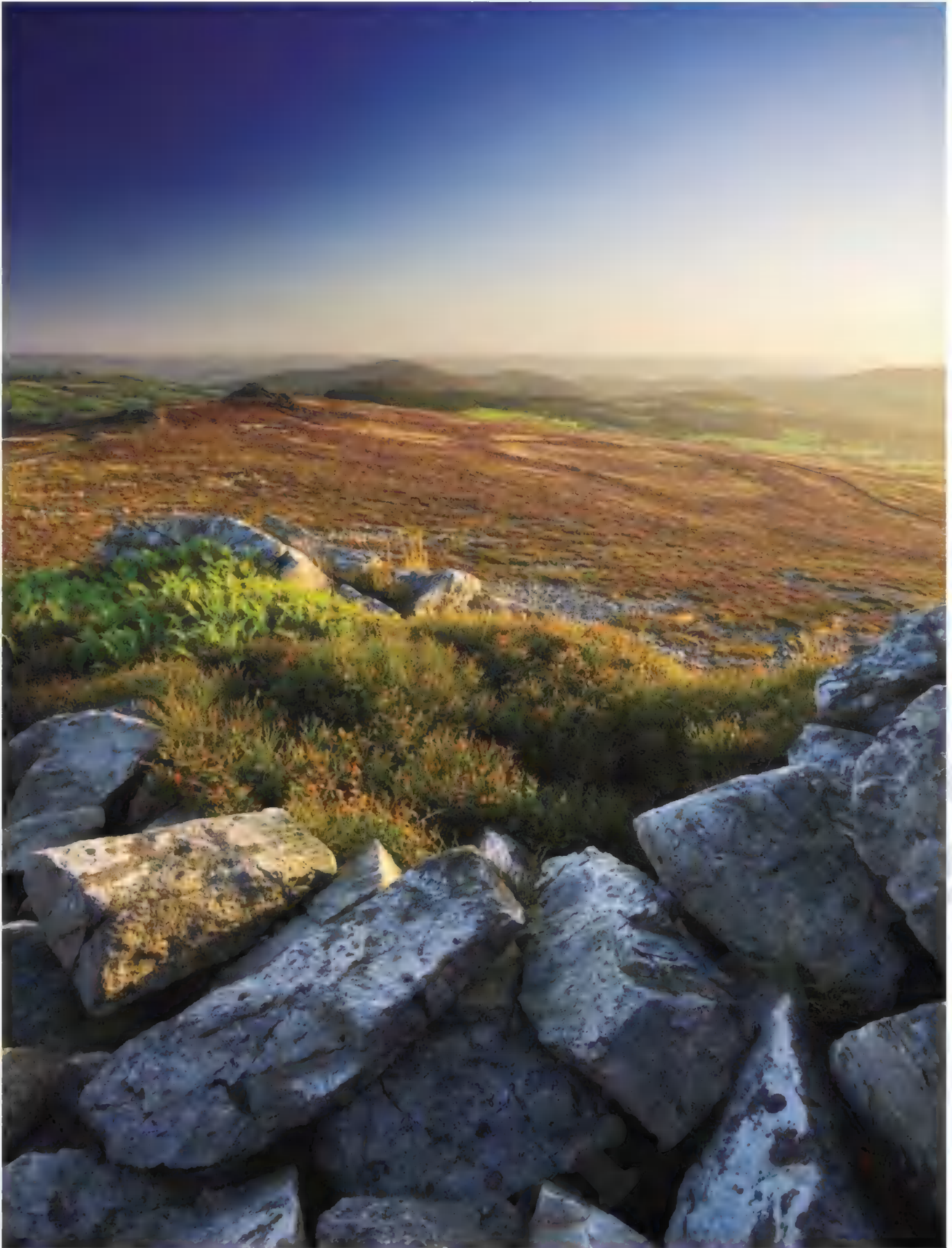
Born on July 12, 1885, at 16 Westbourne Square, Paddington, London, George Sainton Kaye Butterworth, who subsequently grew up in Yorkshire, was the only child of Sir Alexander Kaye Butterworth, a wealthy lawyer and, later, general manager of the North Eastern Railway Company. Educated at Eton, where his musical talents were nurtured by CH Lloyd and Thomas Dunhill, and Trinity College, Oxford, where he was president of the University Music Club during the period 1906-07, Butterworth was intended for a career in law but this foundered in the restive years that followed. After a year (1909-10) of teaching at Radley College in Oxfordshire, he signed up as a student at the Royal College of Music in October 1910 and remained there for a year, studying composition and theory with Charles Wood. Butterworth had clearly mastered the fundamentals of late-19th-century harmony when, at this time, he embarked on his career as a composer, and his awareness of contemporary national and continental music developments were enlivened by a year as a music critic for *The Times* (1908-09) under Fuller Maitland. But the principal stimulus towards shaping his style as a contemporary figure was folksong and dance. In part this

was encouraged by a close friendship with Vaughan Williams and by his membership of the Folk-Song Society, both of which began during his student days at Oxford, but it was in folk dance, as a morris man and co-founder of the Folk-Dance Society in 1911, that he found greatest fulfilment. In fact, when it came to his profession, Butterworth keenly remonstrated 'I'm not a musician, I'm a professional dancer', and surviving film, with Cecil Sharp and the Karpeles sisters, attests to his active involvement in the movement.

Yet, more generally, the rural pursuits of folksong collecting and the pastoral myth were liberating factors in Butterworth's escape from his privileged existence, while the intrinsic elements of folk tunes – their simple narratives and modal characteristics – provided him (as they did Vaughan Williams and Holst) with a vital means of freeing himself from the traditional syntax of the German musical heritage of his forebears. After his all-too-brief year at the RCM, Butterworth returned to the family home (now in London). A career in music, especially composing, was the source of friction between him and his father; a further source of sorrow was the death of his mother (formerly a professional singer before her marriage) in

1911; and, if Stephen Banfield's assertion is true, a homosexual proclivity may also have generated an inner and unresolved conflict. As John Rippin suggested in the *Musical Times* in 1966, with the outbreak of war in 1914 Butterworth found a sense of purpose as a British officer in the 13th Durham Light Infantry. His acts of great bravery and self-sacrifice in action, signified by the awards of the Military Cross – a second time on the night of his death at Pozieres on August 5, 1916, at the Battle of the Somme – attest to his total commitment and courage as a soldier and, for many, entirely obscured the artistic achievements of his life before the war. His death, commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial, was keenly mourned by all those who knew him.

Butterworth completed his settings from Housman's collection *A Shropshire Lad* between 1909 and 1911. The first set, *Six Songs from A Shropshire Lad*, often praised for its subtle economy of treatment, was published in 1911 and first given at the Oxford University Musical Club, then organised by a young Adrian Boult. *Bredon Hill*, a second cycle, rather more complex in its accompanimental designs, was published in 1912. Part of Butterworth's



PHOTOGRAPHY: JAMES OSMOND/GETTY IMAGES

In his Shropshire Lad song-cycles, to which the rhapsody is an 'orchestral epilogue', Butterworth's contemporary harmony expresses the darker side to Housman's pastoral world

delicate equation in fashioning his songs was to imbue his melodies with folksong, a feature which readily chimed with the quasi-folk rhythms of Housman's verse. Yet ingeniously, at the same time, Butterworth, with his impressive knowledge of contemporary harmony (and by the time he composed these songs he had quite evidently assimilated, like his journalist colleague WC Denis Browne, what he needed of the late Romantics but also figures such as Scriabin, Debussy, Ravel, Vaughan Williams and Frank Bridge) was able to amalgamate bucolic modality with post-Wagnerian chromaticism, the combination of which allowed him to express the darker, ironic side to Housman's pastoral world, even more so, one might argue, than the melancholy, introspective and even at times cynical settings of Vaughan Williams's *On Wenlock Edge* of 1909 which Butterworth would have known intimately.

Butterworth probably finished the composition of his rhapsody in 1911, at about the same time as he completed his two sets of Housman songs. It was first performed under Arthur Nikisch at the Leeds Festival on October 2, 1913, to critical acclaim. As he explained in his programme note for the first London performance on March 20, 1914, under Geoffrey Toye at Queen's Hall, the rhapsody was 'in the nature of an orchestral epilogue to [my] two sets of *Shropshire Lad* songs; the thematic material is chiefly derived from the melody of... "Loveliest of trees", but otherwise no connection is to be inferred with the words of the song. The intention of the Rhapsody is rather to express the home-thoughts of the exiled "Shropshire Lad".'

Butterworth's use of the opening song of his first set, 'Loveliest of trees', was extensive and it is understandable that, after originally naming his orchestral work *The Land of Lost Content*, he came up with a second title, *The Cherry Tree*. The song's first two vocal phrases and the following 'fanfare' interlude

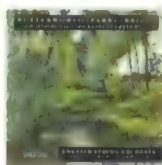
of the piano delineate the first verse and Butterworth makes full reference to this event at the first climax of the rhapsody (when we reach E flat major). Interestingly, however, when we first hear the material, the initial two phrases are reversed, rather like the last verse of Butterworth's song, where the piano postlude is highly articulate in its wintry expression of man's mortality. Indeed, it is in this wordless passage that we get a glimpse of the fertile, symphonic invention of what Butterworth was to write in his rhapsody.

Butterworth's structure is in one sense simple, in another, complex. The frame of the work, one of the most haunting in all English music, is in A minor and marked *Moderato, molto tranquillo e senza rigore*. Its stillness is lucidly portrayed by a long chord in the strings, supporting antiphonal, Dorian 'calls' between wind and divided violas and violins – truly an evocation of the exiled Shropshire Lad's 'blue remembered hills', of an arduous agrarian life, set under an oppressive grey Shropshire sky. This frame seamlessly proceeds to seep into a longer through-composed paragraph based around E flat major, with its own central interlude (*tranquillo*) in B minor. All the time, however, Butterworth predicates this longer section on elasticity of tempi, the copious reworking of his song material and an ever-changing palette of pointillistic orchestral colours (almost chamber-like at various points). Moreover, the gradual and deliberate dissolution of tonality leads to a strident, climactic 'cry' of the Shropshire Lad, embodied in a nebulous, Debussian wash of whole tones, until it is tranquillised by the return of E flat in a plagal cadence that might have come from the pages of the slow movement of Vaughan Williams's *A London Symphony* (a work in which Butterworth generously assisted). A more reflective, becalmed development of the song material persists in the coda that follows, as if our

central, exiled protagonist has found some form of peace, yet the juxtaposition of E flat with the A minor frame that concludes the work evokes a disturbing sense of unchanging continuum, underscoring Housman's obsession with the inexorable passage of time and of nature's obliviousness to humanity. Such a sentiment is touchingly summarised in Butterworth's quotation of the last song (scored for a solitary flute) from *Bredon Hill*, 'With rue my heart is laden', which dwells pensively on the passing of youth and 'golden friends'. And the ruminative disposition of Butterworth's rhapsody after the war – when it received many performances – seemed to encapsulate so many of the collective national emotions of loss, especially of youth and unfulfilled talent, which Butterworth himself, along with Denis Browne, Rupert Brooke, Edward Thomas, Kennard Bliss and Frederick Kelly came to represent as 'martyrs'.

### THE RECORDINGS

So slender was Butterworth's orchestral output that recordings of *A Shropshire Lad* are inevitably coupled with works by other composers and very often (but not exclusively) the rhapsody is accompanied by the composer's three other orchestral miniatures, the two folksong-inspired *English Idylls* (1912) and the idyll *The Banks of Green Willow* (1913) based on the eponymous folksong. Among the earliest available recordings is one made by **Leopold Stokowski** of a live performance he gave during his three years (1941-44) with the NBC Symphony Orchestra, the only time in fact that he ever conducted the piece. Though there are blemishes on the recording which occasionally affect the pitch and obscure some of the orchestral detail, Stokowski's interpretation is not without some merit. He gives considerable attention to the changes of tempo – in particular Butterworth's recurrent instruction of *affrettando* (to hurry) – so



### BEST MODERN RECORDING

ESO / **Boughton** • Nimbus © NI5068

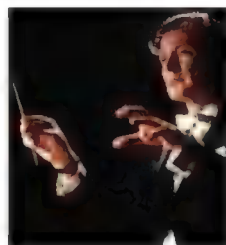
A fresh and invigorating reading which merits repeated listening. Couplings are Butterworth's other orchestral miniatures, Parry's *Lady Radnor's Suite* and Bridge's *Suite for String Orchestra*.



### BEST HISTORIC RECORDING

Hallé Orchestra / **Boult** • VAI © VAI1067

This recording, full of raw vitality, offers a fascinating link with the premiere performance. It comes as part of a two-CD set with other significant archive performances by Boult of British music.



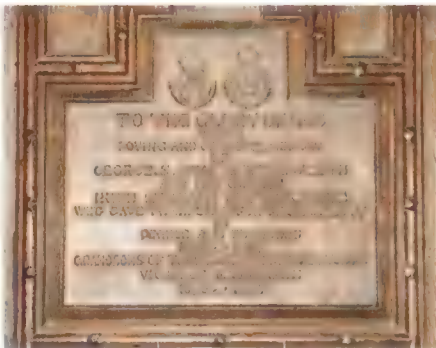
### BEST COUPLING

ASMF / **Marriner** • Decca © 468 802-2

Marriner's recording appears on a CD devoted to Butterworth's music, offering an ideal opportunity to hear the songs on which Butterworth based his orchestral essay.



Above: Butterworth, centre, with The English Folk-Dance Society's First Men's Morris Side in 1911  
Below: Memorial plaque at St Mary's, Deerhurst, Glos., where Butterworth's grandfather was vicar



Butterworth's acts of bravery, signified by the awards of the Military Cross, attest to his commitment as a soldier

intrinsic to a successful reading of the work's arc-like design. I find the interlude section in B minor rather too slow and Stokowski's 'grand' concept of the larger orchestral sound and gestures somewhat militates against the refined nature of Butterworth's fragile style of scoring, but nevertheless one senses Stokowski's genuine affinity with this music, especially its more dramatic elements, and the fervour that lies within Butterworth's score is certainly vivid here.

**Adrian Boult**, a fervent advocate of Butterworth's music, recorded the work four times (his first recording was as early as 1920, featuring the British Symphony Orchestra and issued in 1921 by His Master's Voice). As a student he witnessed the premiere of the first *Shropshire Lad* song-cycle, met Butterworth at Hugh Allen's Oxford home and sat with Butterworth in the audience to hear Nikisch's premiere of the rhapsody at Leeds. Hence Boult's own readings have the privilege of referring to Butterworth's own conception – or at least that of Nikisch's premiere. Boult's 1942 recording was with the Hallé Orchestra and is now available as part of a two-CD

set with many other significant archive performances of music by Vaughan Williams, Bliss, Walton and Elgar. With the technology as it was then, the plangent clarinets are a little too distant to create a convincing sense of the balanced 'antiphony' with the divided violas, but the sense of melancholy stillness at the opening is palpable. Much of the lyrical playing from the strings also has a richness and dynamic tension, but the strength of Boult's interpretation is the

controlled process of *animando* and *largamente* with which the piece expands and contracts and which, by constantly moving forward, lends that heart-rending sense of yearning to the rhapsody's emotional world. Not all the playing is together, notably the strings in the climactic section before the return to E flat – a weak point in several of the recordings – but Boult's sense of urgency scores where Stokowski's broader, overlaid tempi hamper. Boult's second recording,

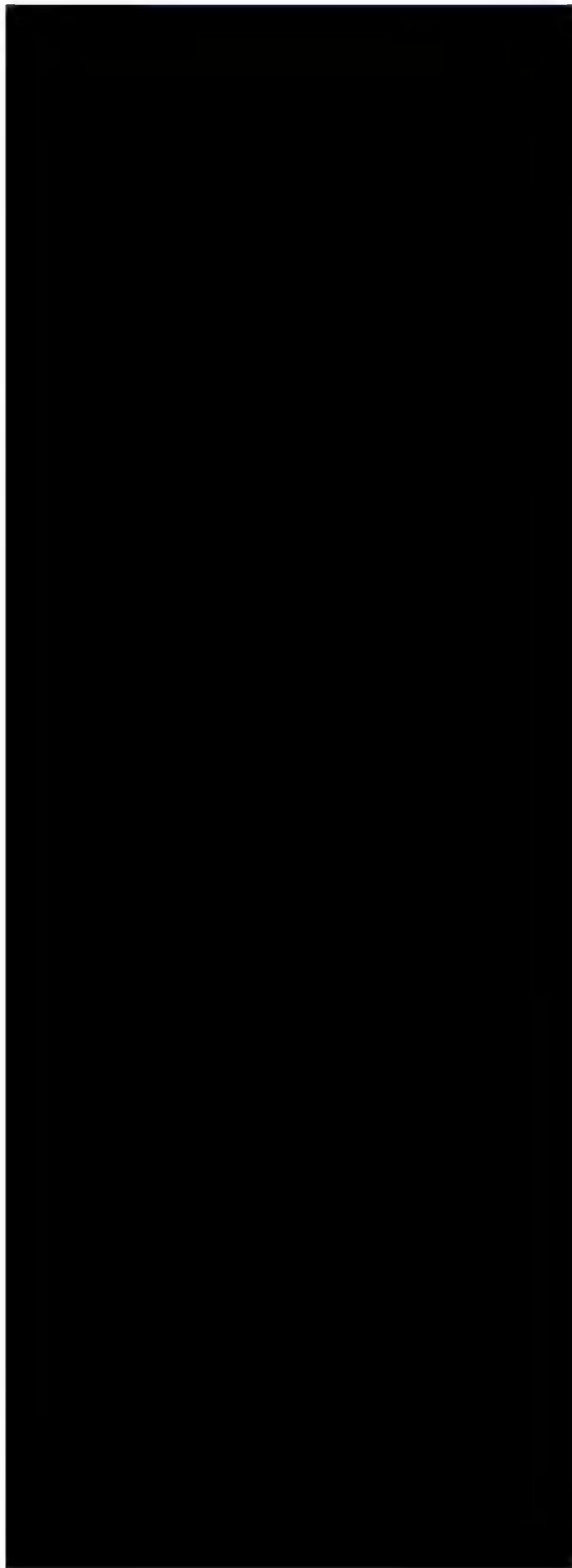
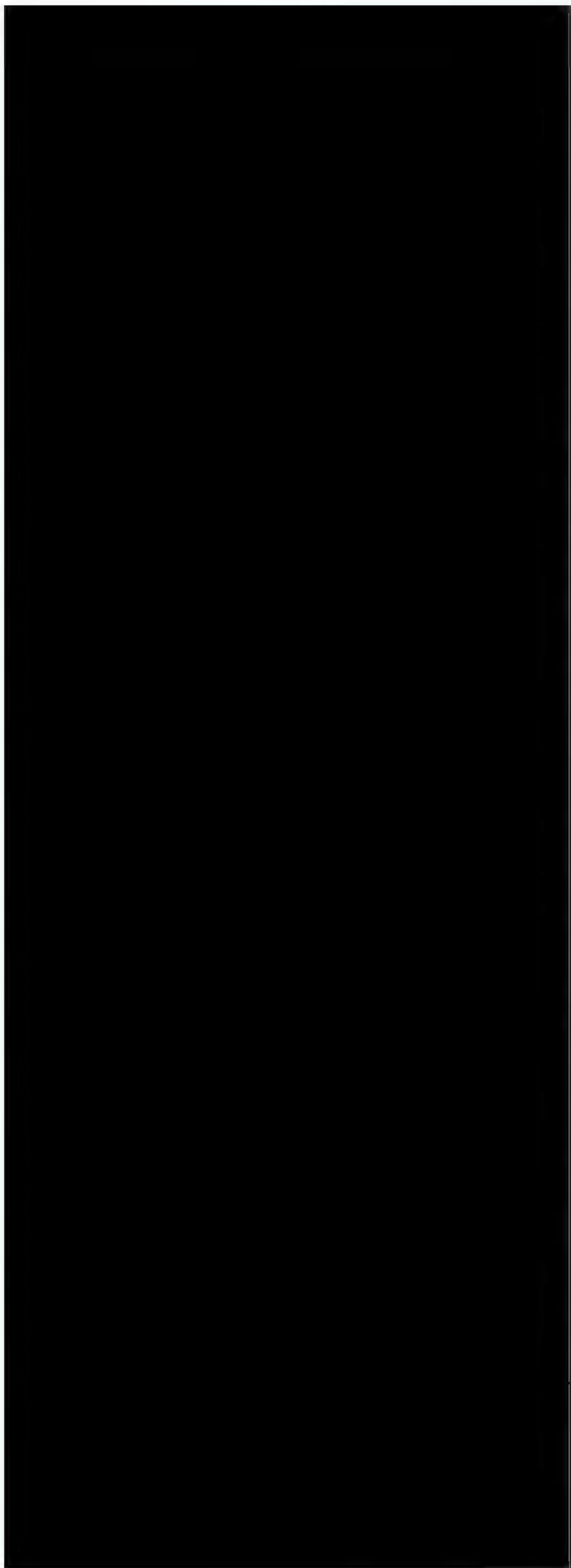
## SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

### DATE / ARTISTS

<b>1942</b>	Hallé Orch / <b>Boult</b>
<b>1944</b>	NBC SO / <b>Stokowski</b>
<b>1954</b>	LPO / <b>Boult</b>
<b>1956</b>	Hallé Orch / <b>Barbirolli</b>
<b>1971</b>	English Sinf / <b>Dilkes</b>
<b>1973</b>	LPO / <b>Boult</b>
<b>1975</b>	ASMF / <b>Marriner</b>
<b>1986</b>	English Stg Orch / <b>Boughton</b>
<b>1992</b>	RLPO / <b>Llewellyn</b>
<b>2002</b>	Hallé Orch / <b>Elder</b>

### RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)

VAI (P) VAI1067 (7/42*)
Cala (M) CACD0528
Belart (B) 461 354-2 (9/97)
Barbirolli Society (B) (2) SJB1022 (3/87*)
EMI (S) (2) 680526-2 (12/71*, 11/81*)
Lyrta (P) SRCD245 (1/08)
Decca (M) 468 802-2 (1/77*); (B) (2) 452 707-2DF2 (8/97)
Nimbus (P) N15068 (10/88); (S) (4) N15210/13
Argo (P) 436 401-2ZH (6/93 - nla)
Hallé (M) CDHLL7503 (A/03)





Arthur Nikisch premiered Butterworth's rhapsody in 1913

with the LPO in 1954 (which comes with *The Banks of Green Willow* along with British classics by Bax, Holst, Vaughan Williams and Elgar), has, of course, greater clarity which allows us to hear more of Butterworth's skilful orchestral polyphony, not least the wonderful, piercing sound of the 'calling' clarinets. By this time his reading had become more fluid and even more flexible in tempo. The 1942 recording, by comparison, seems pent-up and a little too hurried, whereas the admixture of drama and lyrical reflection in the 1954 recording has a more natural ebb and flow.

On the whole, though, Boult's reading of the principal tempi remains constant, as it does in his third recording, with the LPO in 1973 (now reissued with the *Idylls* and *The Banks of Green Willow* as well as some rare orchestral works by Howells, Hadley and Warlock), whose orchestral sound has an even greater vibrancy and ensemble. Indeed, most persuasive about this latest interpretation, at least for me, is the sense of passion and meaning in the orchestral gestures – the upwards-swooping string octaves, the languid clarinets, the telling string *tremolandos* of the frame's reprise and the poignant wistfulness of the solo strings – even if, at times, some of the detail is lost in the greater weight of the orchestral sound at climaxes.

John Barbirolli's recording of 1956, with the Hallé, comes in another two-CD anthology of English classics (including some interesting recordings of John Ireland). Barbirolli is much more deliberate with the slow tempo of the opening and, though there is poetry in the careful shaping of Butterworth's 'vocal' phrases, the slow speeds and generous *allargandos* make for a certain disjunction within the larger structure. Admittedly, at the highest point of climax Barbirolli is more exuberant and effusive, and the sound of

the Hallé ensemble is powerfully sonorous, but the coda retreats back into a slow tempo which seems too indulgent and, in the case of the final bars, strangely untidy in the clarinets.

Neville Dilkes's recording of 1971 with the English Sinfonia, newly reissued on an English anthology called 'The Lark Ascending', has greater clarity of sound than Boult's earlier recording but less finesse in terms of the orchestral dynamics and nuances (there are one or two ungainly and misplaced accents too), which spoils the overall effect, and the level of the brass seems too brash at the points of climax. Meanwhile, a recording entirely of Butterworth's music in Decca's 'British Music Collection' series places the two *Shropshire Lad* cycles (beautifully performed by Benjamin Luxon and David Willinson) appropriately next to the composer's four orchestral miniatures, directed by Neville Marriner with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields in 1975. Marriner, like Barbirolli, is over-spacious with his opening tempo and at times I find those parts of the structure which should be more animated tend to drag, even if the beautiful recorded sound has a compelling chamber-like quality and transparency to it, so fitting to Butterworth's gift for imaginative instrumentation. As a recording, however, along with the composer's other orchestral pieces (which I find more convincing as performances) and the juxtaposition of the Housman song-cycles, this CD is a useful summary of Butterworth's genius.

Nimbus's pioneering ambisonic recording of 1986 with the English String Orchestra under William Boughton (which, besides the *Idylls* and *The Banks of Green Willow*, has a different coupling of Parry's *Lady Radnor's Suite* and Bridge's *Suite for String Orchestra*), made in the generous acoustic of the Great Hall at Birmingham University, has a rich ambience and range of dynamics, and Boughton's imaginative tempi have a suppleness that lends coherence to Butterworth's seamless form. There is also much fine wind-playing on this recording (again, the opening phrases of the clarinets have a fine and evocative resonance) and the 'fanfare' music has an unequalled muscularity. My only quibbles here are some slightly blemished ensemble string passagework before the return to E flat, and the obscuring of the all-important harp *glissandos* at the major climax.

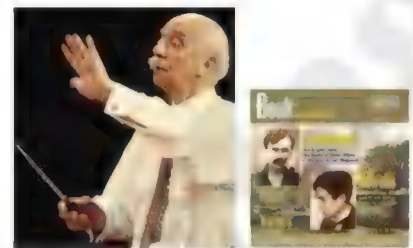
The 1992 recording by Grant Llewellyn and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra is attractive (as are the couplings of Coleridge-Taylor and MacCunn) and Llewellyn draws a careful and precise reading from his players. There is much to extol in terms of the beautiful solo playing of horn and cor anglais but the lower recording

level makes the finer detail – the harp especially – difficult to perceive, which, given Butterworth's fastidious orchestration, is frustrating.

Finally, of more recent vintage, is Mark Elder's 'English Rhapsody' recording of 2002 on the Hallé's own label (coupled again with Butterworth's other miniatures, though featuring rhapsodic works by Delius). Much as the sound of this recording is well balanced and full of sumptuous orchestral textures and wonderfully fashioned, tender phrasing, Elder's over-languid tempi never really get going and his reading lacks that vital sense of forward momentum which, in accordance with Butterworth's deftly chosen markings, generates its overwhelming impression of anguish at its points of highest tension. This might be a fine pastoral evocation but I feel no conflict or torment.

From this array of recordings, I therefore return ultimately to Boult's recording of 1973. Made in his eighties (when he was still actively making recordings), its mellowed distillation of Butterworth's finely graded nuances and golden orchestral sound radiates that satisfying fusion of poetic irony and agonised nostalgia which is surely at the heart of Housman's poetry. And while, for many, *A Shropshire Lad* may remain an iconic work within the canon of the so-called 'English pastoral school' and, for some, inescapably a 'lament' on the composer's premature death during the First World War, it is that darker, troubled side of the rhapsody's rural idyll which Butterworth so meticulously epitomised in this most plaintive and deeply personal symphonic work. **G**

Visit [gramophone.co.uk/features/focus/george-butterworth](http://gramophone.co.uk/features/focus/george-butterworth) to see Butterworth morris dancing



## THE TOP CHOICE

New Philh Orch / **Boult** • Lyrita © SRCD245  
Boult's last (1973) reading of Butterworth's masterpiece has a golden orchestral sound which radiates the essence of nostalgia and inner conflict at the heart of Housman's poetry. It is usefully coupled with the two *English Idylls* and *The Banks of Green Willow*.



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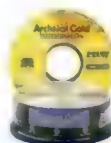
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# MUSICAL JOURNEYS

Gramophone's monthly search for the best classical music experiences around the world

## Moritzburg Festival

Amanda Holloway enjoys outstanding musicianship in the opulent surroundings of Moritzburg Castle



Baiba Skride, Lise de la Salle, David Aaron Carpenter and Alban Gerhardt; cellist Jan Vogler and pianist Olli Mustonen in the castle's breathtaking mirrored salon

A chamber concert in the exquisite mirrored salon known as the Monströsensaal of Moritzburg Castle could be a daunting affair for a sensitive musician. Row upon row of gilded stag heads stare down accusingly from the painted walls, trophies bagged by the castle's one-time owner, Augustus the Strong, Elector of Saxony. But the sublime strains of a Beethoven string trio played in this intimate acoustic instantly banishes thoughts of the barbaric acts that took place centuries ago.

The picture-postcard Baroque castle is the chief venue for the Moritzburg Festival, a two-week series of chamber concerts based around castles and churches in lush Saxony farmland. Cellist Jan Vogler, the artistic director and co-founder of the festival, deploys his considerable charm and enthusiasm to attract an extraordinary roster of artists. 'I use my solo career to feed the festival,' he admits. 'Whenever I'm performing with someone, I ask them to come and play at Moritzburg.' Or indeed at the Dresden Festival, which he also finds time to direct, in tandem with his busy concert and recording career.

Moritzburg celebrates its 20th anniversary next year and Vogler can look back with pride at his contribution to the artistic life of the former East Germany. 'I was born in East Berlin and as a young cellist I spent four summers at the Marlboro Festival in the US. I've always had an interest in how the music world functions and when the Wall came down I decided to bring such a festival to Saxony. I invited some of the artists I met at Marlboro, and they came!'

Today artists such as Baiba Skride and Alban Gerhardt, along with rising stars such as violinists Karen Gomyo and Arnaud Sussmann, have given up precious summer days to stay in a comfortable woodland inn and share music, food and conversation with their colleagues. The rehearsal schedule is full, but the performances have a freshness and sense of discovery that lift them to another level. The 'Moritzburg effect', according to Vogler, is a result of living together in harmony, close to nature, in an

atmosphere of tolerance. 'That's what chamber music should be. You have your own ideas, but you also listen to others, and from this comes something special.' Festival concerts sell out quickly, with visitors from as far afield as the US returning annually.

Having a composer-in-residence is a key element of the festival. Previous invitees have included Turnage, Adès, Rihm and Harbison. Vogler is delighted to have three such eminent, and different, talents this year as performer-composers Olli Mustonen and Jörg Widmann, and Sofia Gubaidulina. 'Sofia is one of the great composers of our time,' says Vogler. 'There's a kind of transcendental power in her music, but she doesn't write everything into the score – she expects the performer to bring something to it. Being able to ask her, "Is that the way you imagined it?" or "What do you suggest?" – is the experience of a lifetime.'

Jörg Widmann, due to play his dramatic, knotty *Fever Fantasy* for clarinet and ensemble, was obliged to shorten his visit as he was preparing for the premiere of his opera *Babylon* in Munich. It proved how crucial the input of a composer could be, as even these exceptional players struggled to fully understand his intentions when rehearsing without him.

Mustonen was there to perform some of his chamber pieces, but also played a mesmerising Bach partita for a rapt audience in Moritzburg Church. Rehearsing his *Toccata* for piano, string quartet and bass, his colleagues had a chance to listen to his ideas and to offer their own opinions. For Mustonen, one of the pleasures of Moritzburg, particularly for a pianist, was the chance to meet other musicians. 'Normally I reserve the summer for composing. But it's a great privilege for a composer to hear his works being played – and by such good musicians.'

It's a privilege for the audience, too. Next year's anniversary provides the perfect opportunity to experience the 'Moritzburg effect' for yourself. Save the date right now.

■ *Moritzburg Festival, August 11-23, 2013; visit [moritzburgfestival.de](http://moritzburgfestival.de)*

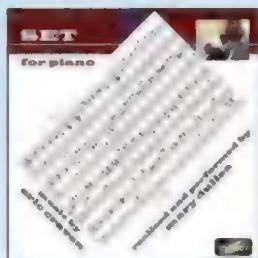
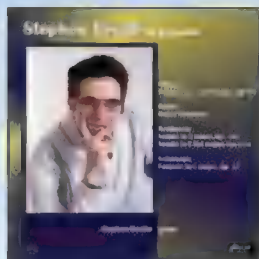
## NEW RELEASES

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Described as 'one of the most talented young musicians to emerge from the UK' by Frankfurter Neue Presse, Beville's musicianship and deep consideration of his music are well demonstrated on his first commercial recording.

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### ERIC CRAVEN: SET FOR PIANO

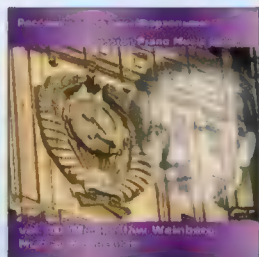
Craven is a composer who has created "non-prescriptive" composition, in which the performer has varying degrees of freedom around a set core. In this twelve section work, the degree of prescription increases in each subsequent section.

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metier MSV 28525

### RUSSIAN PIANO MUSIC VOL. 10

This second disc of music by Polish-born composer Mieczysław Weinberg forms the complete set of his piano sonatas, as the companion to DDA 25105, Volume 9.

**MURRAY McLACHLAN**  
divine art DDA 25107



### MAGICAL PLACES

The spirit of a place is evident in these showstoppers. These symphonic poems for piano duet are evocative of locations which the composers have found inspirational. Works by Mussorgsky, Alfvén, Ibert, Lyadov, Britten, and Ireland.

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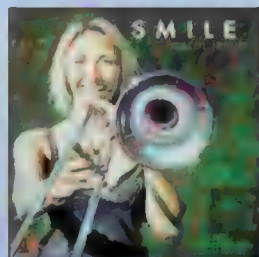
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## Kuhmo Festival

**Andrew Mellor** attends some eccentric yet inspired concerts

Coming to the tiny Finnish town of Kuhmo during festival time is a little like stepping into an odd, disorientating dream – the sort where you stumble upon a lone church in the woods on a Monday morning only to find there are 400 people sat inside listening to Bach and Handel without moving a muscle. That, in fact, is pretty much what happened this July, and it put me in mind of the first time I came here

*'When the strange-brew programmes work they can be intensely illuminating'*

four years ago and was thrust straight into an epic three-hour concert programmed entirely from pieces that shared a common opus number.

That concert provided the memorable sight of 40 professionals shuffling off stage having just performed a Bach Cantata while a child from the local junior school plodded on from the other side in his shorts, plonked his music on the piano and played a Mozart sonata with the sort of emotional control you might expect from Murray Perahia. Kuhmo always mixes local and international talent, but it also requires that each of its visiting artists – 172 this year – offers hours of coaching to a local student. And still we wonder at Finland's musical prowess.

Strangely moving performances are common here but are as much about conditions as skill. Influenced by the stillness of the lake, you hear a genuine concert silence in all the venues. The stand-out from the concerts I attended in 2012 was Natacha Kudritskaya who, hunched over a Steinway with Matilda Kärkkäinen, sent up Chopin's *Souvenir de Paganini* with hard-edged 21st-century wit.

## The insider's guide

Gramophone selects upcoming unmissable musical events

### October

#### 1 London, Royal Opera House

Antonio Pappano conducts *Götterdämmerung*, the final opera in Wagner's *Ring* cycle, starring Susan Bullock and directed by Keith Warner. Repeated on October 9 and 24, and November 2. [roh.org.uk](http://roh.org.uk)

#### 13 Stratford on Avon Music Festival

International soprano Lesley Garrett headlines the festival, which runs from October 13-21, along with clarinetist Emma Johnson and pianist Freddy Kempf. [stratfordmusicfestival.com](http://stratfordmusicfestival.com)

gives a recital performance of works by Bach, Villa-Lobos, Cardoso, Morel, Savio and Domeniconi. [rcmusic.ca](http://rcmusic.ca)

#### 20 Los Angeles, Walt Disney Concert Hall

Soloist Johannes Moser gives the premiere of Enrico Chapela's Concerto for Electric Cello, *Magnetar*, with the LA Philharmonic conducted by Gustavo Dudamel on October 20 and 21. The programme also includes Adams's *Short Ride in a Fast Machine* and Prokofiev's Symphony No 5. [laphil.com](http://laphil.com)

#### 30 St Petersburg, Philharmonie

The Basel Symphony Orchestra, led by Dennis Russell Davies, perform a varied Russian programme opening with Raskatov's *Mysterium Magnum* for soprano (Elena Vassilieva), bass (Nikolai Didenko) and orchestra. Also on the programme is Schnittke's Concerto for Viola and Orchestra with Yuri Bashmet, and Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*. [sinfonieorchesterbasel.ch](http://sinfonieorchesterbasel.ch)

#### 16 New York, Metropolitan Opera House

Metropolitan Opera presents Verdi's *Otello*, with Renée Fleming as Desdemona alongside Johan Botha as Otello, Michael Fabiano as Cassio and Falk Struckmann as Iago. [metoperafamily.org](http://metoperafamily.org)

#### 18 Toronto, Royal Conservatory

Classical guitarist Miloš Karadaglić



Defying explanation: Natacha Kudritskaya (far right) with this year's pianists

'I know all the artists at this year's festival by name' says the artistic director Vladimir Mendelssohn, 'their girlfriends, boyfriends, what they like to eat, how they like to play. It's my duty.' He's an eccentric, but when his strange-brew programmes work they can be intensely illuminating. I wonder, though, if his 'chamber music festival' that encompasses music from the choral and operatic repertory (and dance) is misnamed. 'By chamber music, we mean the music we love,' he counters. 'We mean music where there are no tricks any more – it's either good or it isn't. It's the heart of music. We are it.' In that statement is something of the nonsensical, whimsical and provocative glory of this festival by the lake in eastern Finland. He might not be able to explain it too well, but then, nor can I. Best come and experience it for yourself. **G**

• *Kubmo Festival, July 13-27, 2013; visit [kubmofestival.fi](http://kubmofestival.fi)*

## November

**14 Berlin, Philharmonie**  
Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta* is performed in concert by the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra and Chamber Choir, conducted by Emmanuel Villaume with soprano Anna Netrebko as *Iolanta*.  
[berliner-philharmoniker.de](http://berliner-philharmoniker.de)

**17 Helsinki, Music Centre**  
The Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Simon Rattle travel north to perform Ligeti's *Atmosphères*, Wagner's Prelude to Act I from *Lohengrin*, Debussy's *Jeux*, Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé* Suite No 2 and Schumann's Symphony No 3, *Rhenish*.  
[musikkitalo.fi](http://musikkitalo.fi)

**17 Sioux City, Orpheum Theatre**  
In a concert titled 'Creation, Celebration, Culmination', Tine Thing Helseth performs Hummel's Trumpet Concerto before the Sioux City Orchestra tackle Schubert's Symphony No 9.  
[siouxcitysymphony.org](http://siouxcitysymphony.org)

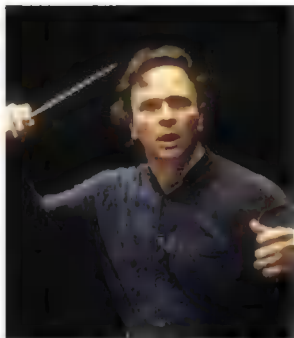
**24 Vienna, Vienna State Opera**  
Tenor Juan Diego Flórez stars in Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* with the Vienna State Opera, conducted by Guillermo García Calvo.  
[wiener-staatsoper.at](http://wiener-staatsoper.at)

## EVENT OF THE MONTH

### October 10

*Beijing, 15th Music Festival (October 9 – November 2)*

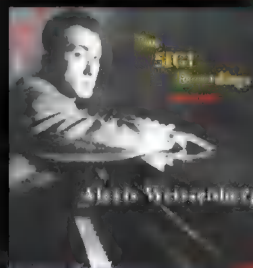
Sir Mark Elder travels with his Hallé Orchestra from Manchester to Beijing to perform an evening of British music on October 10, including Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*, Britten's *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* and Elgar's Symphony No 1. Also appearing throughout the festival are the China Philharmonic Orchestra, the Shanghai Symphony and the London Sinfonietta.  
[bmf.org.cn/en](http://bmf.org.cn/en)



Elder conducts British fare in Beijing



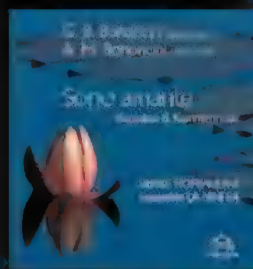
## METRONOME



**DOREMI • DHR7987/B 2CD**  
These recordings date from Alexei 'Sig' Weissenberg's graduation from the Juillard School and prior to his lengthy sabbatical. As such they offer an extremely rare opportunity to hear a varied programme from a pianist who polarised opinion but never failed to pack the concert hall.



**Estonian Record Productions • ERP5312**  
Having made his debut on the opera stage at the age of 8, boy soprano Heldur Harry Põlda has gone on to gather an awe-inspiring list of opera and musical roles. Here he sings popular songs, accompanied by the Tallinn Sinfonietta and Risto Joost.



**THOROFON • CTH2584**  
Giovanni Bononcini and brother Antonio, were celebrated Italian cellists and composers. This CD gives a fascinating document of their varied composing styles as they travelled through Europe at the turn of the 18th century, and contains thrilling accounts of their cantatas and chamber works.



**METRONOME • METCD1087**  
Past winner of the Gramophone Award for Baroque music, Carole Cerasi here presents her first ever recording of the Baroque grand-master of the keyboard, Domenico Scarlatti. Carole's choice of sonatas combines all aspects of his poly-artistic personality. 'A delight' (Gramophone)



**ABP Musique Classique ABP1/2** - The brilliant French violinist Marie Cantagrill's second CD of solo Bach works focuses on the first Partita and Sonata. Her playing is by turns exuberant and profoundly moving, suggesting at all times a charming spontaneity of approach. 'Highly recommended.' (The Strad)

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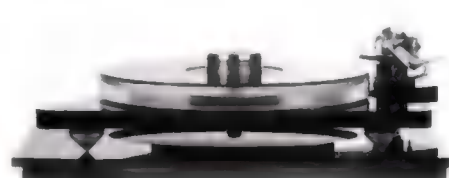
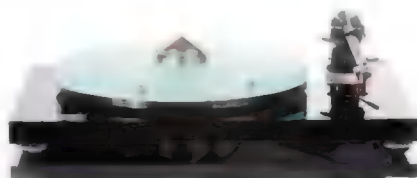
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A recording every bit as spectacular as the performances, Coro's set of Handel's oratorio *Saul* is a fine way to explore and demonstrate a system's abilities.



With fine presence and a palpable sense of space around the musicians, the Elias Quartet's Wigmore Hall Live disc is a superb test of detail-retrieval.



Lavishly staged and with exemplary picture quality and effective use of surround sound, the Royal Opera's *Il trittico* on Opus Arte DVD and Blu-ray is a must-have.

## Headphones, high-end and 'hi-fi everywhere'

Well-known names broaden their appeal while computers and audio get cosier, says **Andrew Everard**



The headphones trend is going to take some stopping: this month I've been listening to the excellent Bowers & Wilkins P3 headphones (see page 139) and it seems every loudspeaker and electronics manufacturer wants to get in on what is the fastest-growing sector of the hi-fi and home cinema market.

MartinLogan's Mikros 70 in-ear 'phones, selling for £149, are slim and elegant in their black-anodised aluminium housings and are designed for maximum noise isolation as their selection of ear-inserts and rubberised cables resist mechanical noise transmission.

Selling for just a pound more, Musical Fidelity's EB-50 earphones have a more 'technical' look, their natural aluminium knurled finish looking for all the world like it's designed to let you grind them into your ear. Company founder Antony Michaelson says: 'Many other companies go to an OEM supplier and buy something off the shelf. Not so with MF. We have been developing and refining the EB-50s for more than a year.'

Even longer in the making have been Naim's flagship Ovator S-800 loudspeakers: the company has been working on them for five years, gaining knowledge about such major design aspects as the Balanced Mode Radiator used to cover the midrange and

treble, and the large flat-diaphragm bass units. The speakers will come in two versions: complete with crossovers at £30,000, or active-ready for £2500 less, designed to be used with Naim's active crossover and amplification.

Rather more compact but still unusual is the latest version of Scandyna's Smallpod speakers, now with built-in amplification and Bluetooth connectivity for phones, tablets, computers and the like. They sell for £629 a pair, complete with remote control, in a choice of gloss finishes – white, black or red.

If you want even 'smaller' music everywhere, Scottish radio specialist Revo has the most affordable colour touchscreen DAB/DAB+ radio on the market, the PiXiS. It sells for £100, also offers FM RDS tuning and, where broadcasts support it, can even show DAB/DAB+ Slideshow graphical information, for example about the music being played.

Finally, another well-known British company, Roksan, has done one of those 'I liked it so much I bought the company' deals to launch its sleek new Oxygene range: the first two models, a £2500 CD player and £3000 integrated amplifier, are derived from products made by Artora Audio. Roksan acquired Artora and has reworked the designs, retaining the novel control-less format of both player and amplifier. A dot-matrix display

fills the front panels, while the slogan 'Less is More' adorns the upper casework. The slogan conceals touch-switches, the user pressing different words to get different results: volume up/down and input selection on the amplifier, and track skip and play on the CD player.

Still not unusual enough for you? Well, the amplifier has three sets of analogue inputs, and 16 channels of Bluetooth input, just in time for the whole world to go wireless... 6

- 1 **MartinLogan** Mikros 70 earphones have a slim, elegant design
- 2 **Musical Fidelity** EB-50s look rather more purposeful and are an in-house design from the British company
- 3 **Naim** has been working for five years on developing this flagship speaker, the Ovator S-800
- 4 **Scandyna** brings Bluetooth and onboard amplification to its Smallpods
- 5 **Revo** keeps things compact with this colour touchscreen DAB radio
- 6 **Roksan** builds on a 'less is more' amplifier and CD player design for its all-new top-end Oxygene range

# Linn Kiko streaming music system

Streaming and fashion come together to broaden the appeal of Linn's network systems



## LINN KIKO STREAMING MUSIC SYSTEM

**Price** £2500

**Inputs** Two analogue inputs, rear-panel phono and front-panel 3.5mm socket, optical and electrical digital, three HDMI

**Outputs** One pair of speakers, headphones (3.5mm socket), HDMI

**Other connections** Ethernet

**Power output** 2x33W into 4 ohms, active bi-amplification

**Formats played** FLAC, Apple Lossless (ALAC), WAV, MP3, WMA (except lossless), AIFF, AAC, OGG, at 7.35-192kHz and 16-24 bits

**Compatibility** UPnP media servers and AV1.0 control points, internet radio

**Accessories supplied** Remote control handset supplied, or via Kinsky app on Windows, OSX, iOS, Android or Linux, or using various third-party solutions

**Dimensions** (Kiko DSM, WxHxD) 28x7.5x27cm, (Kiko speakers, HxWxD) 26x14.6x18.7cm

[linn.co.uk](http://linn.co.uk)

Before you get your hands on Linn's Kiko system, it's hard to work out exactly what it isn't. The publicity pictures don't really make it clear how compact the whole set-up is; neither is there any sense of how well the Scottish company has thought through the set-up and operation of this new addition to its range. 'Just listen', says the vaguely cube-shaped box in which the whole £2500 system is delivered – and that really is all there is to it.

Whether it's destined to be the main system in a small apartment or an adjunct to one of Linn's other streaming systems – perhaps to bring sound into a kitchen, study or bedroom – this little package really is a lot of Linn thinking clad in curvaceous new clothing, and a range of colours, too.

We've come a long way from the time when a full-house Linn active – sorry, Aktiv – system consisted of a stack or two of seemingly identical black boxes, each one with a grey power button bottom right, and a display and a set of buttons to the left. I'm sure I've told this story before, but one of the funniest things about Linn's provision of a complete system for the Music Room in Virgin Atlantic's Business Class Clubhouse at Heathrow years back was watching cool media types trying to work out how to get a peep out of the thing. Having the remote control helped – a bit – but you could still

while away an hour or two before your flight trying to work out which box you should put the CD in to get music. And I swear they juggled the boxes around occasionally, just to keep frequent flyers mystified.

That was a Linn Aktiv system then; Kiko is a Linn Aktiv system now. Two amplifiers per channel are built into that sleek central unit, which also houses the inputs and outputs, digital crossover for the speakers, streaming hardware, preamplifier and – well, actually no controls whatsoever, aside from an on/off rocker switch on the right end-panel.

Connection to the similarly teardrop- (or is that wing-?) shaped speakers provided with the system is via chunky cables which terminate at each end with Neutrik Speakon plugs (also supplied). Then, with the system switched on, the Linn Wizard software will play music stored internally to show you that all is well, first from both speakers, then from each speaker in turn.

Of course, if you buy the system from a Linn dealer, installation comes as part of the deal; but the procedure above is also outlined in a very neat set-up Wizard designed to run on home computers for those wanting to self-install. It not only takes you step by step (not that there are many steps) through connection and set-up but also detects the system on your network and starts playing music from your computer through it. That,

in essence, is what Kiko is about – getting music from your computer through some decent amplification and speakers. Once it's plugged into your system, it can take music from computers, portable devices and network-attached storage – using Ethernet and your Wi-Fi router, Linn's own Songcast software, Apple AirPlay or a whole raft of third-party apps for a variety of operating systems – and play it through its rather good onboard amps and supplied speakers. A remote control is supplied but the lack of a display on the Kiko main unit means it's best used only for simple functions: playback of music from computer storage is more about pushing music from a computer using Songcast, or using an Apple iOS or Android handheld device running Linn's Kinsky control software to control the flow of music from a remote computer or storage.

There's also internet radio. Kiko comes preset with a range of stations, including those run by the company's record label, but you can use Linn's Konfig app on a home computer to change the region whose stations you want to hear or select your own favourites using the [tunein.com](http://tunein.com) platform, then deliver that preset list over the internet to Kiko.

So it does all that, and is seriously cute. To give you an idea, that main unit is just 28cm wide and 7.5cm tall when used in

horizontal orientation (it can also be stood on one end to slip into a bookshelf, for example), while the speakers are 26cm tall and a little under 15cm wide – and comes in a choice of colours: black, white, champagne, silver and either light or dark blue.

But is that it? Not quite: as well as its streaming capability, Kiko can accept analogue audio on a pair of phonos to the rear or a 3.5mm stereo socket on the front, has both optical and electrical digital inputs, and a trio of HDMI inputs, allowing Blu-ray players, games systems and the like to be run through it (there's a monitor output, also on HDMI, for video passthrough). All of which, along with its ability to stream music at everything from a bargain-basement MP3 right up to 192kHz/24-bit hi-res audio, makes this a pretty potent little system.

### PERFORMANCE

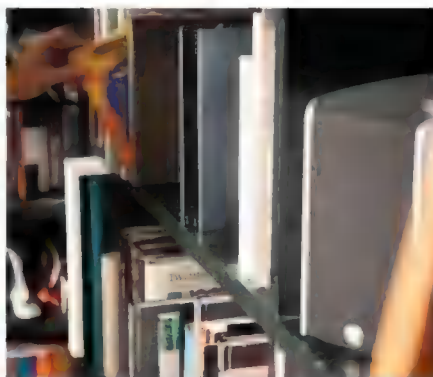
I have to admit that, as soon as I heard about Kiko, I was keen to get my hands on a system, so as soon as Linn supplied one for review I took it home to try in short order.

With typical thoroughness, the company supplied a laptop preloaded with its various set-up and operation software – the Wizard, Konfig and Kinsky – along with some music from the Linn Records catalogue, but I got the Kinsky system up and running with the Wizard running on my usual Mac, only having to lapse back into Microsoftland for a moment to get the Windows version of Konfig to sort out allocating my radio presets to the test unit. That done – and with the caveat that, in the usual Linn style, the system only offers wired network connection, and should ideally be used with a wired connection

*'This neat package and its marketing are so well sorted it's hard to see how Kiko can fail to attract both new users and Linn enthusiasts alike'*

between your computer and the router/switch to which it's attached – Kiko was up and running in about 10 minutes flat.

Doing things the Kinsky way soon becomes second nature – you queue (or is that cue?) up your chosen music on a playlist, choosing discs, works, tracks or any combination, hit play and away the system goes. You can also save playlists – good for programming an evening's listening. Or, of course, you can do all this direct from the computer, using iTunes or similar software and Linn's Soundcast, which simply makes the system the audio output device for your PC or Mac.



The main unit can be stored vertically on a bookshelf

The output power of Kiko won't please those who think you need big numbers in the Watts column to get a good sound: you get 33W per channel, although, of course, the tweeter and woofer in each speaker are driven separately, and this proves more than adequate for the kind of rooms in which this system is likely to be played. I found the sound a bit over-polite at low volume settings, at least when the whole system was factory-fresh, but it both opened up pleasingly when the volume was raised to 'sit up and listen' rather than 'background' level and showed definite signs of loosening up and filling out the sound the more the system was run. And I ran it a lot!

Not that there's anything major wrong with the sound out of the box. Indeed, for the kind of listeners at which Kiko is targeted, a spot of sonic decorum won't go amiss as it tames the rougher MP3 files and low-bitrate internet radio, while the ability to crank up the level and turn the system into something that can breathe more freely is also attractive. More to the point, Kiko will demonstrate well when run at a decent level in a retailer's shop and then won't disappoint – far from it – when the customer eventually has the system installed at home.

Fed with one of Linn's high-resolution recordings, the Kiko system is able to demonstrate decent punch in the bass – although it goes down to only 66Hz or so – combined with a seamless transition into the midband and on up into the treble. With the speakers at the extremes of the cables supplied – around 3m – and toed-in slightly, it's possible for the system to create a convincing sound stage way beyond the capability of simple desktop 'computer audio' set-ups.

Yes, there are rival systems able to offer similar flexibility for the same kind of money – a Naim UnitiQute and a pair of Neat Iota speakers would seem an obvious rival – but Linn has got both this neat package and its marketing very well sorted. It's hard to see how Kiko can fail to attract both new users and established Linn DS enthusiasts alike. **AE**

### DESIGN NOTES

Gilad Tiefenbrun

MD, Linn Products

**On early choral memories and Studio Master releases**



Gilad Tiefenbrun was grounded in music at an early age. 'Some of my earliest memories of are of my grandmother singing. She was a member of a choral society and really encouraged me to sing. I actually learnt how to read music in her house when I was five or six, and quickly joined the school choir.'

Encouraged by his parents to take up piano from seven, and – inspired by seeing Julian Bream at the Edinburgh Festival – the classical guitar, he says: 'There was a lot of classical music played in the house and of course my father was always coming home really excited to play an old favourite to show off the latest development of his Linn Sondek turntable.'

'My favourite classical works were Mozart's *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*

and Bach's Prelude and Fugue in D minor, which has a darkness and drama that fired my imagination. Thanks to my involvement with Linn Records and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, I've widened my favourites in recent years to include Beethoven's piano concertos, and I love the early Mozart symphonies.'

'What we understand about music at Linn is that playing and listening to music is one of the very few things that can change how you feel and so can be a very powerful force in life. The more accurately music is reproduced, the stronger is its communicative power.'

'One of the biggest advances we have made in recent years is the introduction of 24-bit recording, which has allowed us to capture more of the musical performance. We now provide the original 24-bit recording, the Studio Master, as a download from our website and allow people to experience the original recording in their living room.'


'Music can now be enjoyed in the home at its highest-ever quality.'



Music lover: Linn MD Gilad Tiefenbrun at work


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## REVIEW BOWERS & WILKINS P3

# Lightweight headphones sound as good on the move as when you're listening at home

The latest product from the British speaker company expands its personal audio line

There's a certain inevitability about the arrival of a headphone range from Britain's most successful loudspeaker company, Bowers & Wilkins: it's clearly been keeping an eye on current trends in the consumer electronics market and has a growing 'personal audio' line-up.

The company's Zeppelin iPod speaker system has already spawned Mini and Air variants, and the little MM-1 desktop speaker system is both one of the most stylish of its kind and among the best-sounding. And, like many loudspeaker companies, B&W has also branched out into headphones. Coining the attractive tagline 'Concert for one', its original models were their flagship P5 on-ear design and the in-ear C5s, both designed to ensure a high degree of noise-isolation allied to excellent sound quality.

Now the latest model, the P3, is designed to offer most of the benefits of the P5 in a more affordable, more portable form. It sells for £169 and is another on-ear design but this time it can be folded and stowed in a pocket or the protective case provided. There's an iPhone remote control on the connecting lead, but this can be swapped for a standard lead should you wish to use the headphones with another brand of portable, or just use them at your desk, or wherever.

A 30mm mylar-damped laminate diaphragm is used and, within the earpieces, the terminals connecting cable to drive unit have been positioned for uniform airflow around the drivers, allowing greater linearity of movement. The removable ear-cushions are attached magnetically and covered in



a speaker-type acoustic fabric – actually developed with the same company B&W uses for its speaker grilles – with matching material on the headband. The frame is made from aluminium for lightness and strength, and weighs just 130g.

### PERFORMANCE

The P3 headphones are light and comfortable, and cool even after protracted use. They don't grip the head as tightly as some designs, so may not be suitable for those who indulge in strenuous exercise while wearing them. But for normal use – commuting by public transport, longer journeys or just listening at home – they're excellent.

The sound is beautifully balanced, delivering a sparkling but never harsh treble and plenty of detail without ever becoming tiresome, a smoothly revealing midband and solid but fast bass. The ability to deliver orchestral basses and percussion or the lower octaves of a piano is never in question.

The closed-back design does a good job of suppressing external noise – though not

### BOWERS & WILKINS P3 ON-EAR HEADPHONES

**Impedance** 34 ohms

**Frequency response** 10Hz-20kHz

**Cables** 1.2m, with/without iPhone remote, 3.5mm plug at source end, 2.5mm at headphones

**Finishes** Black or white, with aluminium detailing

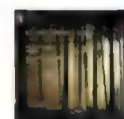
**Dimensions** (HxWxD) 16.5x15x4.8cm, 10.5x15x4.8cm when folded

**Weight** 130g

**bowers-wilkins.co.uk**

as good as 'proper' noise-cancelling designs – and it keeps the music in pretty well, too. Rather in the manner of the company's best speaker designs, the P3 headphones are all about the communication of what's being played, and the presentation of recordings in an open, spacious manner with none of that stereotypical 'shut-in' headphone sound.

As a go-everywhere headphone design, the P3 is extremely well thought-through and is able to move from home playback on the end of an amplifier to use with an iPod, iPhone or iPad while still delivering fine sound. On style, versatility and performance, there's much to like here. **AE 6**



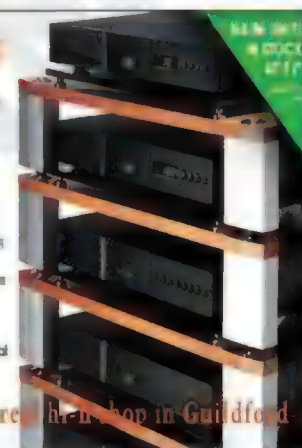
### HOW TO TEST...

If you want to hear just how much detail and expression the B&W headphones can deliver, try them with the beautifully natural and intimate sound of Felicity Lott's 2002 programme of Strauss songs, remastered and released on the Champs Hill label



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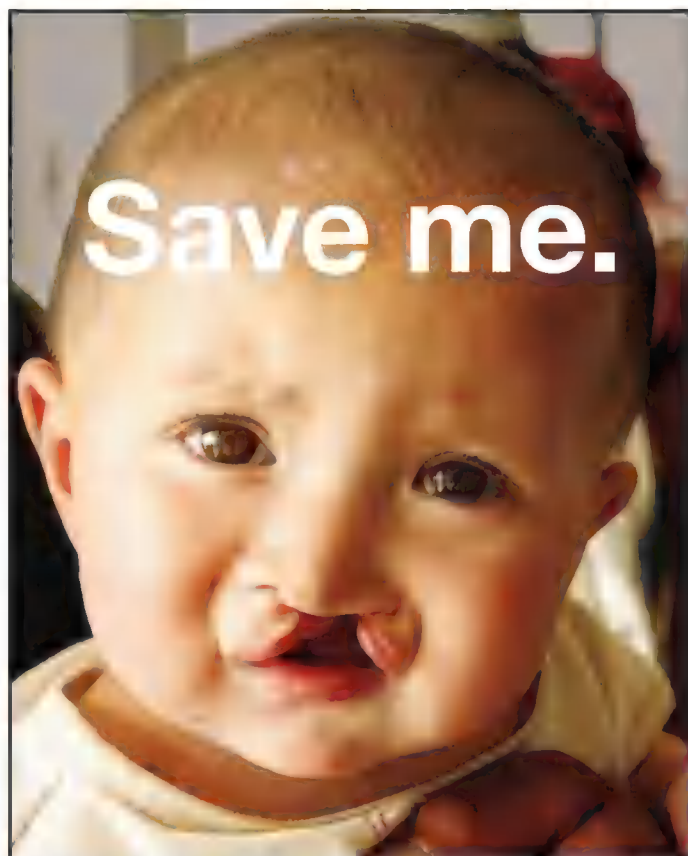
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# ● ESSAY

‘There’s a major opportunity out there, yet hi-fi and home cinema retailers are ignoring the chance to help customers – and make money’

Selling customers a network music player is the easy bit; where retailers are failing is in the chance to sell and set up complete systems that make life easier for consumers

There’s a chill wind blowing through the world of hi-fi and home cinema retailing: footfall. That’s why the number of people visiting shops is down – and why specialist retailers are struggling.

At the very top end of the market the business is still there, whether it’s big-ticket system components selling better than their manufacturers may have hoped or complete systems, carrying five- or six-figure price-tags, being sold to, and installed for, the wealthy.

I visited a training session for custom installers not so long ago and was amazed to discover that their business was still pretty good. Whereas the wealthy once went for homes with the maximum number of bedrooms their budget would allow, I’m told now they’re downsizing on sleeping accommodation and instead spending money on leisure facilities such as home cinemas. Which, of course, is where those enterprising custom installation specialists come in.

However, in the mass market, or what’s left of the lower end of the enthusiast sector, things are a bit grim. The economic situation has made customers more cautious about their spending; those with money to spend are much more savvy about prices and what a product can be bought for if one goes to

*‘I’ve recently asked two respectable audio stores to provide a storage solution and both said no’*

an online retailer without the overheads of a high street bricks-and-mortar operation. Traditional retailers will tell you that ‘showrooming’ – consumers examining or trying the goods in a shop then going off in search of a better price online – is becoming a major problem: some say they’re being forced to slash prices to compete, despite those greater overheads, or even drop some products more commonly bought online.

In such circumstances, you’d expect retailers to be looking for any opportunity to win customers back by offering better



Building a network-attached storage system such as this QNAP isn’t so hard – but why won’t retailers do it for you?

service or, indeed, additional services. In short, there’s a major opportunity out there, yet the hi-fi and home cinema retail industry is choosing to ignore this chance to help customers – and to make money.

A conversation with a reader about setting up network-attached storage (NAS) to hold his music and feed it to a streaming music player left me dumbfounded. As he put it: ‘I’ve recently asked two respectable audio stores in my city if they will provide an NAS drive as part of a package. And in both cases the answer was the same – “No.”’

He went on: ‘What on earth is wrong with them? This is a critical part of a digital system which needs much more expertise than setting up a CD player, amp or speakers. It’s a very poor reflection on these shops that they can’t provide a complete digital upgrade package – I think they are too busy selling Sonos kit, which doesn’t really suit me.’

That isn’t a lone complaint. I seem to spend increasing amounts of time in email exchanges with those struggling to set up such systems and I think I’ve told the story in these pages before, of the frustrations of one major manufacturer of streaming hardware with the reluctance of its retailers to have a functioning network in their shops, let alone offer to supply and instal the same equipment for their customers. That’s one of the beauties

of the Linn Kiko system reviewed this month (on page 136). Not only is it designed to be used by those with no knowledge of NAS drives, DLNA servers and network protocols but the deal includes installation by the supplying retailer (even though it’s not exactly hard to set up should you decide to go it alone).

Whether or not retailers aren’t supplying and offering to install NAS drives and the like because they can’t be bothered, don’t feel confident about the technology or simply feel online pricing for such devices will always beat what they would want to charge, I think they’re missing a trick. Not only could they be selling some extra equipment, they may also be able to sway customers over to buying streaming audio systems in the first place.

Adding a ‘digital plumbing’ service to the offering is going to instil confidence in the consumer and, as another correspondent said to me recently, ‘I know I can buy it cheaper at Amazon but I’d gladly pay over the odds if someone would set it up, connect it and show me how to use the damn thing.’

I suspect there are many consumers out there thinking just the same or even avoiding the whole subject of music streaming simply because they fear it’s far too complicated. If that isn’t an open goal for enterprising retailers, I don’t know what is. **AE**



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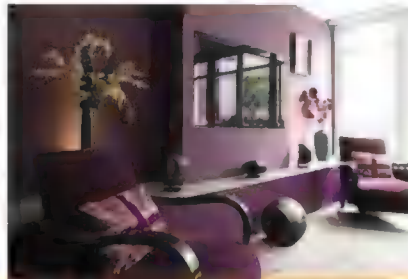
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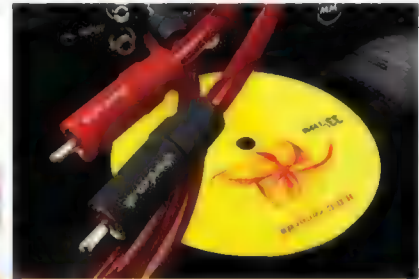
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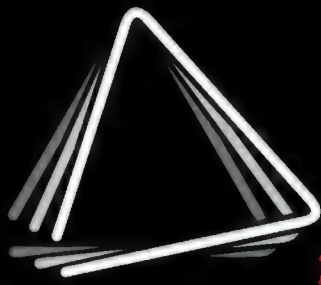
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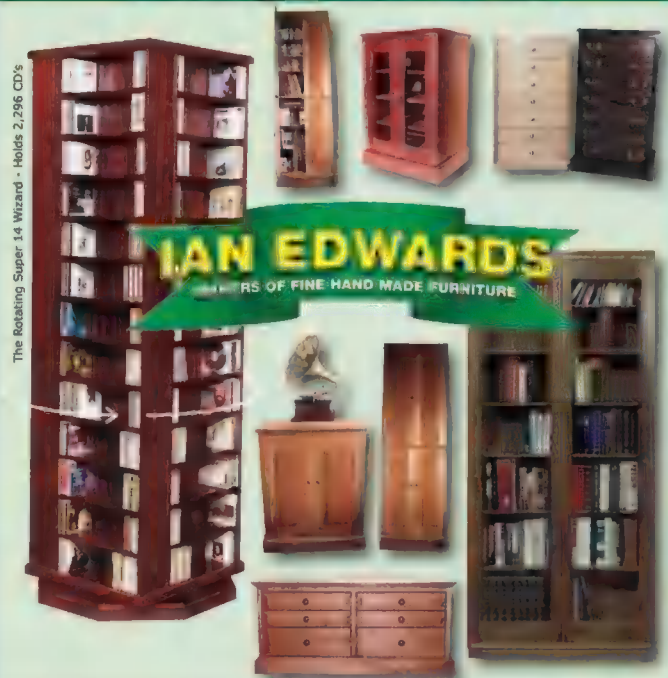
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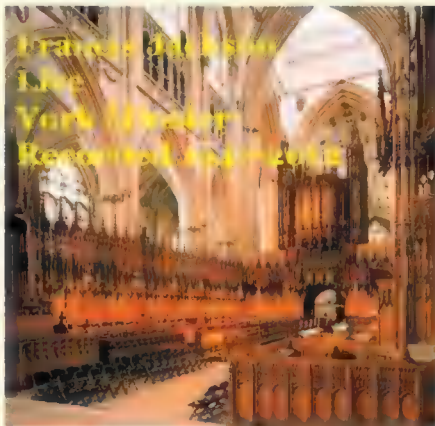
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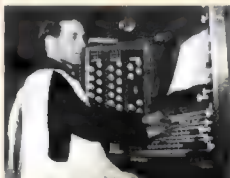
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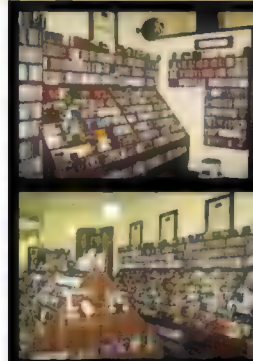
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# Alex Jennings

The actor on his love for Britten's music and on finding inspiration by working with such opera stars as Bryn Terfel

**T**he music in my house when I was growing up included fairly mainstream popular classical played on gramophone records by my mum – Verdi, Puccini and so on. From my father it was jazz, so there was always a mixture in the house. That's absolutely the springboard – my tastes came from that.

I can't really remember exactly when I discovered Benjamin Britten, as that certainly wasn't through my mum. It was when I was at university – the end of the '70s – that I started going with friends to concerts, and I remember seeing *Peter Grimes* at the Opera House with Jon Vickers, which was a pretty gobsmacking event. I was absolutely bowled over by it and by him – not just his singing but his acting abilities. And I know I saw the *War Requiem* around this time. I kind of discovered a love for Britten myself, really.

Having read a lot about him and having played him in *The Habit of Art*, I hear his sort of struggles in his music – and the Englishness of it, I suppose – and I've always had connections with that part of the world. Psychologically, his work is so captivating and exciting. I find just listening to *The Turn of the Screw* really disturbing – terrifying really! After I finished *The Habit of Art* I got to go to the Red House in Aldeburgh, the house Britten shared with Peter Pears, and stayed there, sleeping in one of the bedrooms, which was slightly weird. It's an incredible house: you absolutely feel their presence there still.

**For me, opera**, when the acting convinces, is sensational. Again, it's mostly Britten that's really moved me in the opera house – there was that brilliant production of *Peter Grimes* that was at the Coliseum a couple of years ago. And Nick Hytner's opera productions – I've worked with him a lot and seen his work in the opera house, his *Julius Caesar* in Paris, his *Xerxes* – have been particular highlights in my opera-going life.

**I've been really** fortunate over the last few years to work alongside some opera singers. I did a production of *Candide* at the Coliseum and *My Fair Lady* at the Châtelet in Paris the Christmas before last – and I'm going to be doing that again next year. I did a gala at the Opera House recently with Bryn Terfel, and to be in a pretty small room next to him – it's been an amazing experience to see him work, a huge privilege to be up close to that power and that awesome acting talent as well.

**It's been fantastic** to work alongside singers who are coming at it, generally, from a completely different direction to me. It was amazing to work with Toby Spence in *Candide*. They approach it very differently to how we work in theatre – it's terrifying as well, the first time we did the sing-through of *Candide* they all came knowing it, which is not what we do. Working with an orchestra is brilliant and the impression I've got is – because I'm not a great singer at all, but I act my way through the songs – that they quite enjoyed it (or they told me they did) because, working with someone who's not quite so rigidly stuck to the notes, no two nights are ever quite the same!



## THE MUSIC I COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT...

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This is such a rich work, and the rehearsal extract, with Britten coaxing the performers, is a real bonus.

**I'm looking forward** to performing in Alan Bennett's *Hymn*.

George Fenton had a commission 10 or 11 years ago to write a piece for the Medici String Quartet and he got Alan on board. It's a mixture of music and narration, and it's about the formative musical influences in Alan's earlier life, of listening to the Hallé and English popular music of the time, palm court orchestra music, and Elgar and Vaughan Williams. The narration weaves in and out with the music; sometimes it's concurrent with the music and sometimes the music takes over. It's a fantastic piece. Alan did some performances 10 years ago but doesn't want to do it any more, so he handed it over to me. I'll also be doing a new short play that Alan has written about himself and his parents. So I've become sort of Alan Bennett-by-proxy, which is slightly weird but very nice! And George's music for this piece is wonderful, really evocative and very moving.

I also do quite a few programmes with Lucy Parham of Debussy's piano music and writings, and another one about George Sand and Chopin. I've also done one with Andrew Kennedy and Julius Drake about Auden's poetry and Britten's songs. It's wonderful to work with people from different disciplines. (B)

Alex Jennings stars in *Hymn* with the Medici String Quartet at Harrogate Theatre on Saturday October 27 at 7.30pm; for more information, visit [harrogatebeat.co.uk](http://harrogatebeat.co.uk)



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